

## IS THERE SOMEBODY IN THERE? SOLILOQUY IN THE PSALMS

The following article contributes to the discussion of the concept of person in Ancient Israel by addressing soliloquy in the psalms. After an introduction to the recent anthropological debate, the article focuses on the difference between the psychological phenomenon of self-talk and soliloquy as a literary device, and then deals with the main psalms where a speaker is talking to his or her “heart” (לב) or “soul” (נפש). These psalms dramatize the inner life of the speaker, who not only struggles with illness, social isolation, divine absence or wrath, but also gets into contact with his or her inner life in order to balance those challenges. Finally, the results are positioned within the broader context of soliloquies in the literature of the Ancient Near East and Egypt, and in the recent discussion of the concept of self in Qumran prayer literature.

### I. RECENT DISCUSSION OF THE CONCEPT OF PERSON IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

The following considerations on soliloquy in the psalms are situated within recent debates in research on the anthropology of the OT concerning the concept of person in ancient Israel. Hence, at the outset, I intend to give a short introduction to this discussion in order to sketch out the context of my interest in soliloquy. The recent discussion of the concept of person in Ancient Israel was initiated by Robert A. Di Vito in his 1999 essay, “Old Testament Anthropology and the Construction of Personal Identity”<sup>1</sup>. Di Vito draws on Charles Taylor’s study, *Sources of the Self* (1989), to make a comparison between the modern and the OT concept of person. According to Di Vito, the modern concept of person is characterized by the following features:

- (1) the modern sense that human dignity lies in self-sufficiency and self-containment, achieved through radical disengagement from one’s personal and social location in the world, (2) the modern feeling of personal unity

<sup>1</sup> R. DI VITO, “Old Testament Anthropology and the Construction of Personal Identity”, *CBQ* 61 (1999) 217-238, here 221. The article was translated into German and published as “Alttestamentliche Anthropologie und die Konstruktion personaler Identität”, *Der Mensch im alten Israel*. Neue Forschungen zur alttestamentlichen Anthropologie und ihren altorientalischen Kontexten (eds. B. JANOWSKI – K. LIESS) (HBS 59; Freiburg 2009) 213-241.

and of having sharply defined personal boundaries, (3) the modern belief in “inner depths”, and (4) the modern conviction that our humanity depends upon a capacity for autonomous and self-legislative action. [...] Of course, in the OT a very different construction of personal identity looms: the subject (1) is deeply embedded, or engaged, in its social identity, (2) is comparatively decentered and undefined with respect to personal boundaries, (3) is relatively transparent, socialized, and embodied (in other words, is altogether lacking in a sense of “inner depths”), and (4) is “authentic” precisely in its heteronomy, in its obedience to another and dependence upon another <sup>2</sup>.

Jon D. Levenson, in his volume *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, has criticized Di Vito’s position as “overstated and too simple” <sup>3</sup>, and the reception of Di Vito’s proposal in Germany points in the same direction. Christian Frevel, for example, has put forward many texts that deal with the distinction between the interior and exterior life of the person and the freedom to choose good or evil (i.e. in favour of or against God) <sup>4</sup>. Indeed, in many OT narratives the characters are portrayed as individuals who, like Noah, act differently from the rest of humanity (Gen 6,5 – 9,17), who leave their relatives behind as Abraham did (Gen 12,1-4), or who act against social convention like Tamar (Genesis 38) — and these are just a few examples taken from the book of Genesis. The behaviour of these solitary and courageous characters is not criticised but rather admired. These examples challenge Di Vito’s concept of basic heteronomy in Israelite mentality. One might even ask to what degree OT texts in the history of their reception have stimulated the idea of accountability *coram deo*, considering that numerous texts deal with sin, sanction and forgiveness. Frevel also stressed that Di Vito followed a paradigm of Israelite mentality that goes back to Henry Wheeler Robinson’s proposal of a “corporate personality” in ancient Israel. Following Robinson, some scholars have construed the ancient societies of the southern Levant as primitive cultures <sup>5</sup>. Certainly, it is not surprising that concepts of the person in antiquity and in modernity are different. However, the question arises to what degree Robinson’s and Di Vito’s concepts are due to a cognitive operation known from social anthropological hermeneutics as “othering”. This means

<sup>2</sup> DI VITO, “Anthropology”, 221.

<sup>3</sup> J.D. LEVENSON, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*. The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life (New Haven, CT 2006) 112.

<sup>4</sup> C. FREVEL, “Person – Identität – Selbst. Eine Problemanzeige aus alttestamentlicher Perspektive”, *Anthropologie(n) des Alten Testaments* (eds. J. VAN OORSCHOT – A. WAGNER) (VWGTh 42; Leipzig 2015) 65-90, esp. 81-82, 87-88; C. FREVEL, “Von der Selbstbeobachtung zu inneren Tiefen. Überlegungen zur Konstitution von Individualität im Alten Testament”, *Individualität und Selbstreflexion in den Literaturen des Alten Testaments* (eds. A. WAGNER – J. VAN OORSCHOT) (VWGTh 48; Leipzig 2017) 13-43, esp. 29-41.

<sup>5</sup> FREVEL, “Person”, 75-78.

that traditional cultures are from the outset perceived by anthropologists as exotic, strange and completely different from their own — a form of perception strongly criticised in postcolonial discourse. Achieving an unprejudiced view of individuality in antiquity, however, is very difficult because individuality is an essential element of the master narrative of Western modernity insofar as it requires (and produces) a counter model in primitive societies in order to be convincing.

Indeed, a brief consideration of the concept of inner depths and individuality within the historical and cultural context of ancient Israel might be instructive. For Ancient Egypt, Jan Assmann and Miriam Lichtheim traced the discovery of inner depths and an emphasis on individuality back as far as the end of the Old Kingdom <sup>6</sup>. Assmann has described several stages in the history of the heart in Ancient Egypt: first, a language of inwardness (“*Innerlichkeit*”), which articulates the relationship between the heart and god, emerged in the period following the twelfth dynasty (seventeenth century B.C.E.), and then the concept of “taking god to heart” (“*Gottesbeherzigung*”), which is closely related to the movement of “Personal Piety”, reached its peak after the Amarna period in the New Kingdom (in the thirteenth and twelfth centuries B.C.E.) <sup>7</sup>. The discovery of individuality and inwardness in Egypt took place hundreds of years before the works of Plato, Paul or even Augustine, which are often seen as starting points for the development of individuality. Furthermore, Jan Dietrich has pointed out several ways in which individuality in Ancient Egypt and the ancient Near East was emphasized: e.g., the pursuit of originality in the instruction of Chacheperreseneb, or the search for fame in Mesopotamia in the Gilgamesh epic <sup>8</sup>. In Ancient Greece, not only the works of philosophers like Plato have to be taken into consideration but also the mystery cults, as Jean-Pierre Vernant has stressed <sup>9</sup>. Pertaining to Greece and Rome

<sup>6</sup> M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Autobiographies Chiefly of the Middle Kingdom. A Study and an Anthology* (OBO 84; Fribourg 1988) 142; J. ASSMANN, “Zur Geschichte des Herzens im alten Ägypten”, *Die Erfindung des inneren Menschen. Studien zur religiösen Anthropologie* (eds. J. ASSMANN – T. SUNDERMEIER) (Studien zum Verstehen fremder Religionen 6; Gütersloh 1993) 81–112; J. ASSMANN, “Gottesbeherzigung ‘Persönliche Frömmigkeit’ als religiöse Strömung der Ramessidenzeit”, *L’Impero Ramesside. Convegni Internazionali in Onore di Sergio Donadoni* (Quaderno / Università di Roma “La sapienza”, Dipartimento di scienze storiche archeologiche e antropologiche dell’Antichità, Sezione vicino Oriente 1; Roma 1997) 17–44.

<sup>7</sup> ASSMANN, “Geschichte”, 93–111; ASSMANN, “Gottesbeherzigung”, 18–21.

<sup>8</sup> J. DIETRICH, “Individualität im Alten Testament, Alten Ägypten und Alten Orient”, *Menschenbilder und Körperkonzepte* (eds. A. BERLEJUNG – J. DIETRICH – J.-F. QUACK) (ORA 7; Tübingen 2012) 77–96, esp. 79–81, 87–92.

<sup>9</sup> J.P. VERNANT, “Individuum, Tod, Liebe. Das Selbst und der andere im alten Griechenland”, *Der ganze Mensch. Zur Anthropologie der Antike und ihrer europäischen Nachgeschichte* (ed. B. JANOWSKI) (Berlin 2012) 155–171, here 163.

in antiquity, several publications of a research group led by Jörg Rüpke<sup>10</sup> criticize schematic and Eurocentric concepts of individuality and reject the idea that individualization was a linear process<sup>11</sup>.

Admittedly, it is not easy to recognize that the customs and beliefs of ancient cultures are neither too different from nor identical to those found in our modern culture — it is a hermeneutical challenge. Presumably, people of ancient Israel were “relatively transparent, socialized, and embodied”, compared to us. But were they “lacking in a sense of inner depths”, as Di Vito maintains?

This is a multi-faceted issue that one scholar will not be able to handle alone. Thus, in the following section, I want to focus exclusively on one segment of this question by dealing with soliloquies. I will therefore analyze texts which reveal an inner relationship or self-reference between the speaker and his or her interior life and not, for example, metaphors related to inner depths. I will focus on the psalms because they belong to the most interesting OT literature with regards to anthropology.

## II. SELF-TALK AND SOLILOQUY

Soliloquy would appear to be a kind of self-talk simply “published” by the omniscient narrator or tragedian. However, soliloquy is actually a literary device known from drama and literature. It is unveiled to the reader or the audience for dramaturgical purposes. Therefore, it has to be distinguished from self-talk as a psychological phenomenon. Surprisingly, soliloquy is quite frequent in OT narratives, as Nikolaus P. Bratsiotis has demonstrated in an extensive study<sup>12</sup>. In a drama, a soliloquy is easily recognized when a character turns away and talks to the audience. In a narrative, we know it is soliloquy when the narrator tells us a character’s thoughts. However, it is not so easy to recognize soliloquy in poetical texts. Bratsiotis sees soliloquy almost everywhere in prophetic texts when no other character is explicitly addressed; he finds it also in the psalms whenever God is not the explicit addressee<sup>13</sup>. I would, however, like to

<sup>10</sup> J. RÜPKE (ed.), *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford 2013); J. RÜPKE – W. SPICKERMANN (eds.), *Reflections on Religious Individuality. Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian Texts and Practices* (Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten 62; Berlin 2012).

<sup>11</sup> J. RÜPKE, “Individualization and Individuation as Concepts for Historical Research”, *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, 3-38.

<sup>12</sup> N. BRATSIOTIS, “Der Monolog im Alten Testament”, *ZAW* 73 (1961) 30-70.

<sup>13</sup> BRATSIOTIS, “Monolog”, 34-37.

restrict my examination to passages which can be uniquely identified as conversations with the speaker himself or herself according to textual signals, especially when the first-person speaker in the psalms talks to his or her own “heart” (לב / לבב) or “soul” (נפש).

### III. THE ADDRESSEES: לב / לבב AND נפש

It is no surprise that only לב / לבב and נפש are addressed as inner entities. לב / לב not only signifies the physical organ, the “heart”, and the emotional centre of the person, but it also encompasses cognitive and volutative functions. In recent anthropological discussions of לב / לבב<sup>14</sup>, Bernd Janowski states that personal identity is constituted by internal motivations that are ascribed to the function of the heart (לב / לבב)<sup>15</sup>. נפש<sup>16</sup> may signify the throat and its functions: hunger, thirst, longing and desire for life. Thus it can also mean vitality, (individual) life and person. It is not only the organ of compassion, passion and joy, but also that of sorrow, suffering and hardship. As Katrin Müller has recently shown, a metonymic use of body parts like this is not a distinctive characteristic of Hebrew

<sup>14</sup> See esp. B. JANOWSKI, “Das Herz – ein Beziehungsorgan. Zum Personverständnis des Alten Testaments”, *Anthropologie(n) des Alten Testaments* (eds. J. VAN OORSCHOT – A. WAGNER) (VWGTh 42; Leipzig 2015) 43-64; M.S. SMITH, “Herz und Innereien in israelitischen Gefühlsäußerungen. Notizen aus der Anthropologie und Psychobiologie”, *Anthropologische Aufbrüche. Alttestamentliche und interdisziplinäre Zugänge zur historischen Anthropologie* (ed. A. WAGNER) (FRLANT 232; Göttingen 2009) 171-181; T. KRÜGER, “Das ‘Herz’ in der alttestamentlichen Anthropologie”, *Das menschliche Herz und die Weisung Gottes. Studien zur alttestamentlichen Anthropologie und Ethik* (ed. T. KRÜGER) (ATHANT 96; Zürich 2009) 91-106.

<sup>15</sup> JANOWSKI, “Herz”, 43-45 et passim.

<sup>16</sup> For a decade, there has been a vivid discussion which cannot be summarized here briefly; for an overview see M. RÖSEL, “Die Geburt der Seele in der Übersetzung. Von der hebräischen *näfäš* über die *psyche* der LXX zur deutschen Seele”, *Anthropologische Aufbrüche. Alttestamentliche und interdisziplinäre Zugänge zur historischen Anthropologie* (ed. A. WAGNER) (FRLANT 232; Göttingen 2009) 151-170; T. KRÜGER, “ach ja die seele. Der Verlust der Seele – ein Gewinn für die theologische Anthropologie?” *Das menschliche Herz und die Weisung Gottes. Studien zur alttestamentlichen Anthropologie und Ethik* (ed. T. KRÜGER) (ATHANT 96; Zürich 2009) 83-89; B. JANOWSKI, “Die lebendige *naepāš*. Das Alte Testament und die Frage nach der ‘Seele’”, *Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments. 5. Der nahe und der ferne Gott* (ed. B. JANOWSKI) (Neukirchen-Vluyn 2014) 73-116; J. VAN OORSCHOT, “Lost in Translation, Regained by Exegesis. נפש in alttestamentlicher Verwendung und Funktion”, *Anthropologie(n) des Alten Testaments* (eds. J. VAN OORSCHOT – A. WAGNER) (VWGTh 42; Leipzig 2015) 117-131; M. BAUKS, “‘Soul-Concepts’ in Ancient Near Eastern Mythical Texts and their Implications for the Primeval History”, *VT* 66 (2016) 181-193; K. MÜLLER, *Lobe den Herrn, meine ‘Seele’*. Eine kognitiv-linguistische Studie zur *naefaeš* des Menschen im Alten Testament (BWANT 215; Stuttgart 2018) (see the bibliography); R. PLEIJEL, “To Be or to Have a *nephesh*?”, *ZAW* 131 (2019) 194-206.

thought; it is also — albeit less frequently — found in modern languages as well <sup>17</sup>. Even in those contexts where “soul” might be the most fitting translation, it is still doubtful, possibly misleading, and so inadequate. Hence, I prefer not to translate נפש but, instead, to refer to it with the transliterated form *naepæš* <sup>18</sup>.

#### IV. SOLILOQUY IN THE PSALMS

Firstly, some Hebrew idiomatic formulations pertaining to the subject are to be presented, even if they do not immediately represent explicit soliloquy in the psalter.

1. *Speaking to / upon / with / within the heart* (לב / לב + ב / עם / על / אל + אמר / דבר pi.)

Whereas there is no speaking *within* the נפש, there are numerous passages in the psalms where somebody speaks to or within his or her heart (אמר בלב). Idioms like speaking to (אל), upon (על) or with (עם) the heart are frequently used as introductory formulae of soliloquies in the OT. However, most examples are found outside the psalter in narrative texts. While praying, Eliezer of Damascus speaks to his heart (דבר אל-לבו pi., Gen 24,45). In his reflections, Qoheleth speaks with (אמר עם, Qoh 1,16) or in (אמר ב, Qoh 3,17.18) his heart. By speaking to his heart (אמר אל-לבו, 1 Sam 27,1), David decides to flee from Saul to the Philistines <sup>19</sup>. A similar wording is “talking upon someone’s heart” (דבר על לב pi., Hanna in 1 Sam 1,13), a phrasing that is often used for talking to somebody else’s heart to gain or to comfort it (see Ruth 2,13; Gen 31,20; 2 Sam 19,8; Hos 2,16) <sup>20</sup>. Apparently, it means to reach someone deep inside (see also Isa 40,2) <sup>21</sup>. Thus, the idioms for speaking to one’s own heart are based on communication with others, but are also used for communication with oneself. Some passages in which אמר בלב is used may be seen to involve soliloquy in a broader sense of the word. Mostly, they refer

<sup>17</sup> MÜLLER, “Seele”, 100-125.

<sup>18</sup> See MÜLLER, “Seele”, 195-205.

<sup>19</sup> Consider YHWH consulting with himself in Gen 8,21 (אמר אל-לבו).

<sup>20</sup> The metaphor of “writing” on the heart in Jer 31,33 might be considered as an even more intense and permanent form of communication with the heart, aiming at a lasting transformation of the center of the person.

<sup>21</sup> G. FISCHER, “Die Redewendung דבר על-לב im AT. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis von Jes 40,2”, *Bib* 65 (1984) 244-250, has pointed out that the wording aims at changing another person’s mind in a state of fear, worry, or sin.

to what the enemies in the psalms speak of within their hearts, e.g. three times in Ps 10,6.11.13. These verses are considered here in more detail.

Psalms 9–10<sup>22</sup> form an acrostic, though its structure is difficult to recognize. Especially in the first half of Psalm 10, the acrostic structure and even the text itself is corrupted or can be brought into doubt in some places. A rhetorical question about YHWH's absence in 10,1 is followed by a long description of the wicked (10,2-11) and a petition for YHWH's intervention (10,12-15). Abruptly, 10,16-18 praise the kingship of YHWH, who has already heard the desire of the wretched and put an end to the deeds of the wicked (10,17-18). The reasons for this sudden change of mood (Gunkel: "Stimmungsumschwung") remain enigmatic, as with many other psalms. According to Wolfgang Iser, it is a "*Leerstelle*" ("blank space") which is to be filled in by the imagination of the recipients.

- 1 rhetorical question (למה)
- 2-11 description of the wicked
  - 2 summary
  - 3-5 arrogant attitude
    - 3-4 words in the mouth: direct discourse (*concept of God*)
    - 5 way of living
  - 6 words in the heart (אמר בלב): direct discourse (*self-concept*)
  - 7 words in the mouth (evil)
  - 8-10 deeds (evil)
    - 8 killing of the poor
    - 9 lying in ambush / seizing
    - 10 falling of the poor
  - 11 words in the heart (אמר בלב): direct discourse (*concept of God*)
- 12-15 petition to YHWH
  - 12 petition to YHWH
  - 13 rhetorical question (על-מה)
    - words in the heart (אמר בלב): direct discourse (*concept of God*)
  - 14 affirmation
  - 15 petition
- 16-18 praise
  - 16 kingship of YHWH
  - 17 listening of YHWH
  - 18 establishing of justice

<sup>22</sup> For numerous arguments in favor of Psalms 9 and 10 as one single psalm, corresponding to the LXX text, see H.-J. KRAUS, *Die Psalmen* (BK XIV I/II; Neukirchen-Vluyn<sup>6</sup>1986) 77; B. WEBER, *Werkbuch Psalmen I. Die Psalmen 1–72* (Stuttgart 2001) 78; C. NEUBER, *Affirmation und Anfechtung. Untersuchungen zu den Reden der Gegner in den Psalmen* (HBS 93; Freiburg i.Br. 2019) 93-97.

The description of the deeds of the wicked in 10,6-11 is framed by their thoughts, by the words in their hearts in 10,6.11. They are reproduced dramatically in direct discourse. 10,6 refers to the self-conception of the wicked: he assumes his position is undisputed. 10,11 describes his concept of God: YHWH has concealed himself. The words in his mouth correspond to what he thinks within his heart (10,7ab). The same is true for his deeds which are described in 10,8-10 using hunting imagery. 10,8-10 form a concentric structure, with 10,9 as its centre and 10,8.10 as a frame (motif: the killing of the poor).

- <sup>6</sup> a He said in his heart (אמר בלב): “I will not waver,  
b from generation to generation, none of which in evil” <sup>23</sup>.
- <sup>7</sup> a his mouth is full of curse, and full of deceit and suppression;  
b under his tongue is evil and harm.
- <sup>8</sup> a He sits in ambush of the courtyards, in secret places he kills the innocent;  
b his eyes peek <sup>24</sup> at the unfortunate <sup>25</sup>.
- <sup>9</sup> a He lies in a hiding place like a lion in his thicket;  
b he lies in ambush to ravish the wretched;  
b he ravishes the wretched by pulling him into his net.
- <sup>10</sup> a He crushes [Q], crouches,  
b and the unfortunate fall by his might.
- <sup>11</sup> a He said in his heart (אמר בלב): “God has forgotten it,  
b he has hidden his face, does not see it forever!”
- <sup>12</sup> a Arise, YHWH! God, raise your hand!  
b Do not forget the wretched [Q]!
- <sup>13</sup> a Why has the wicked despised God,  
b has he said in his heart (אמר בלב): “You will not investigate” — ?  
Ps 10,6-11

The wicked are characterized here — as well as in Pss 14,1; 35,25; 53,2; cf. 28,3; 41,7; 58,3; 64,7 — by what they say within their hearts. Their assumptions about God and about themselves are unveiled. Although this is inaudible from the outside, it can be deduced from their deeds. The portrayal of the heart of the wicked is based on our experience that doing evil is usually preceded by evil thoughts: “Die referierte Rede hat dabei den Effekt, dass sie — wie ein Beweisstück — unmittelbarer wirkt als eine Erläuterung oder Beschreibung. [...] Es wird die Fiktion erzeugt, dass die Zitate die hinter dem Verhalten liegende Haltung des Frevlers ausdrücken” <sup>26</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> WEBER, *Werkbuch*, 77, emends אשר. In the MT אשר is unusual, but it can be retained; for further discussion see NEUBER, *Affirmation*, 89.

<sup>24</sup> MT צפן (“hide”) is emended to צפה (“peek”) due to ἀποβλέπουσιν in the LXX.

<sup>25</sup> Regarding לחלכה (as in Ps 10,10), see NEUBER, *Affirmation*, 90.

<sup>26</sup> NEUBER, *Affirmation*, 173.



Not only the direct petitions (10,12.15; cf. 9,20-21) are intended to motivate YHWH to intervene, but also the description of the evil thoughts (10,4.6) and deeds (10,2-3.5.8-10) of the wicked as well as the rhetorical questions (10,1.13) and the affirmations that YHWH reigns over the enemies of the psalmist (10,14; cf. 9,16-17; 10,16-18). Similarly, Ps 140,3 deals with evil people who conceive wickedness in the hearts (חֲשַׁבו רָעוֹת בְּלִבָּם). It is even worse when someone speaks with two hearts:

- <sup>3</sup> a They say futile things, one to another, with a smooth lip —  
 they speak with a double heart (literally: with heart and heart — בְּלִבָּב וּלְבָב). Ps 12,3

With two hearts within one person, what one says the other contradicts. The falsity of the speech is attributed to a division within the seat of reason. In view of this, the speaker asks YHWH in Ps 86,11-12 to be changed in order to revere YHWH with a whole, i.e. undivided heart.

- <sup>11</sup> a Teach me, YHWH, your ways — I walk in your truth  
 b unite my heart (יִחַד לִבִּי) to the fear of your name.  
<sup>12</sup> a I will praise you, my Lord, my God, with all my heart,  
 b I will honour your name eternally. Ps 86,11-12

Just as “talking within the heart” signifies thinking, so “seeing within the heart” refers to planning and imagination, i.e. the ability to see with the inner eye <sup>27</sup>:

Evil — if I had seen it in my heart (רָאִיתִי בְּלִבִּי), my Lord would not listen. Ps 66,18

In Ps 36,2-3, a *locus classicus* for the question of inner depth, the speaker discovers that sin itself talks to him in his heart, which elsewhere is rather a characteristic of the wicked:

- <sup>2</sup> a Word of transgression to the wicked in the middle of my heart.  
 b There is no fear of God before his eyes.  
<sup>3</sup> a For he has flattered himself in his own eyes <too much>  
 b to find his guilt, to hate <it> <sup>28</sup>. Ps 36,2-3

<sup>27</sup> Consider the “imaginings of the heart” (מַשְׁכִּיּוֹת לֵבָב) of the wicked in Ps 73,7 (cf. Jer 23,16).

<sup>28</sup> Translation and textual criticism of Ps 36,2-5 are under considerable debate which cannot, however, be discussed here in detail. For the interpretation implied by the translation above, see M. LICHTENSTEIN, “Das ‘innere Chaos’. Beobachtungen zu Ps 36 und der Möglichkeit zur Sünde im eigenen Herzen”, *Ich will dir danken unter den Völkern*. Studien zur israelitischen und altorientalischen Gebetsliteratur. FS B. Janowski (eds. A. GRUND – F. LIPPKE – A. KRÜGER) (Gütersloh 2013) 49-67, esp. 51-53, 56-61; see also N. LOHFINK, “Innenschau und Kosmosmystik”, *Im Schatten deiner Flügel*. Große Bibeltexte neu erschlossen (Freiburg i.Br. 2000) 172-187, esp. 173-174, 177-179.

Given that many psalms describe evil arising from dialogue within the heart, it might be asked whether inner depths have a consistently negative connotation. Thus, J. Dietrich assumes that the decisive difference from modernity is that this “inner heart” is by no means seen positively, but is portrayed negatively compared to an externally guided heart. The latter is good and social, while the internally guided heart is egotistical and the source of deception, betrayal and hypocrisy <sup>29</sup>.

Although the heart can lead us astray, the positive potential of the heart is spoken of frequently. The heart can receive joy coming from God, as in Ps 4,8 (cf. Ps 105,3) where the heart appears like a vessel from which joy overflows. This joy within the heart can result from the commandments of YHWH (Ps 19,9; cf. Ps 119,111). The heart responds to the *torah* within, which then determines the way of life (Ps 37,31; cf. Ps 119,11). These texts, however, still might be seen as examples of an externally guided heart (“außengeleitetes Herz”). Nevertheless, the **לב** is considered to be able to compose a poem pleasing to God (Ps 19,15), to articulate desires acceptable to God (Ps 21,3; cf. Pss 20,5; 37,4; 49,4), and to long for God and his temple (Ps 84,3: **לב** together with **נפש**) without any help from the outside. In addition, the OT speaks of many people who are “upright in heart”: **ישרי לב** <sup>30</sup>, which is an interior quality of the person from which good will and action emerge. The psalms often talk about people of pure heart (**בר לבב**, Ps 24,7; cf. Ps 73,1) or with integrity of the heart (**תם לבב**, Ps 78,72; cf. Ps 101,2). According to Ps 73,13, it is possible to keep the heart pure. Thus the interior dialogue with the heart has positive connotations, as can be seen in the entrance liturgy of Psalm 15. After an invocation and a two-fold question in v. 1, the entry conditions for the temple area are defined in vv. 2-5:

- <sup>1</sup> YHWH, who may dwell in your tent?  
who may sojourn on your holy mountain?
- <sup>2</sup> Who walks uprightly,  
and does justice,  
and speaks truth in his heart (**דבר אמת בלבבו**) <sup>31</sup>. *Ps 15,1-2*

<sup>29</sup> DIETRICH, “Individualität”, 85: “Der entscheidende Unterschied zur Moderne besteht darin, dass dieses ‘innerliche Herz’ keineswegs positiv gesehen, sondern in einen negativ konnotierten Gegensatz zum außengeleiteten Herzen gesetzt wird. Das außengeleitete Herz ist das gute und soziale, das innengeleitete das egoistische, das Täuschung, Treubruch und Heuchelei ersinnt”.

<sup>30</sup> See Pss 7,11; 11,2; 32,11; 36,11; 37,14; 64,11; 94,15; 97,11; cf. Pss 84,6; 119,7.

<sup>31</sup> For textual criticism and translation of Psalm 15, see A. GRUND, *Die Himmel erzählen die Herrlichkeit Gottes*. Psalm 19 im Kontext der frühjüdischen Toraweisheit (WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2004) 317-318.

Thus, it is not only possible to tell the truth within the heart, but it should even be the rule for cult participants. If this condition was not fulfilled by a majority, the temple cult would have been visited only sparsely. Finally, talking within the heart is regarded positively in Gen 8,21 where God talks within God's own heart (cf. Qoh 3,17.18).

2. *Invitation to the heart (לֵב) to praise (jussive): "May my heart rejoice in YHWH" (Ps 13,6)*

The first example of an explicit speech to one's own heart stems from Psalm 13. It is a paradigm both of an individual lament psalm and for a sudden change of mood (in terms of Herrman Gunkel's notion of "Stimmungsumschwung")<sup>32</sup>. The psalm revolves around the question of who will ultimately rejoice — the enemies or the speaker<sup>33</sup>:

- <sup>4</sup> a Look on me, answer me, YHWH, my God.
- b Give light to my eyes, so that I will not sleep in death,
- <sup>5</sup> a so that my enemy may not say: I have prevailed against him
- b and my adversaries do not rejoice if I waver. Ps 13,4-5

In v. 6 the speaker invokes his or her own heart to join the joyful praise — just as elsewhere in the psalms other worshippers are invoked to praise:

- <sup>6</sup> Though I have trusted in your faithfulness.
- May my heart rejoice at your salvation:
- "I will sing to YHWH, for he has done me well!" Ps 13,6

The invitation to the heart can only be recognized when the jussive גִּיל in v. 6 is translated correctly<sup>34</sup>. Thus, the heart is invited to express joy through spontaneous, enthusiastic exclamations<sup>35</sup>. This means the emotional function of the heart (לֵב) is the focus. The last sentence might be interpreted as an anticipated quotation of the speech of the heart<sup>36</sup>. The future answer of the heart's response to the invitation can already be heard. In a similar way, the *naepæš* is invited to praise in Ps 34,3.

<sup>32</sup> See B. JANOWSKI, *Konfliktgespräche mit Gott. Eine Anthropologie der Psalmen* (Göttingen 2019) 56-58.

<sup>33</sup> See C. ABART, *Lebensfreude und Gottesjubiläum*. Studien zu physisch erlebter Freude in den Psalmen (WMANT 142; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2015) 262-263.

<sup>34</sup> In KJV and Luther 2017 (translation with indicative instead of jussive), the communication to the *naepæš* cannot be recognized.

<sup>35</sup> For an analysis of גִּיל, see C. BARTH, גִּיל gîl, *ThWAT* I (1973) 1013-1018.

<sup>36</sup> See F.-L. HOSSFELD – E. ZENGER, *Die Psalmen I*. Psalm 1–50 (NEB 93; Würzburg 1993) 97; H. IRSIGLER, "Psalm-Rede als Handlungs-, Wirk- und Aussageprozeß. Sprechaktanalyse und Psalmeninterpretation am Beispiel von Psalm 13", *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*. FS W. Beyerlin (eds. K. SEYBOLD – E. ZENGER) (Freiburg i.B. 1994) 63-104, esp. 81-83; JANOWSKI, *Konfliktgespräche*, 56-57.

3. *Invitation to the  $\text{nəpəš}$  to praise (jussive): “May my  $\text{nəpəš}$  boast about YHWH” (Ps 34,3)*

In contrast to the first example from the ending of Psalm 13, the following invitation to praise extended to the  $\text{nəpəš}$  is placed at the beginning of Psalm 34. Psalm 34 is an acrostic that is a compound of a superscription (v. 1), a thanksgiving section (vv. 2-11) and a wisdom speech (vv. 13-23). It starts in vv. 2-4 with an invitation to praise:

- <sup>2</sup> a I will bless YHWH all the time,  
b continually his praise <shall be> in my mouth.
- <sup>3</sup> a my  $\text{nəpəš}$  may boast about YHWH.  
b May the humble ones listen and rejoice.
- <sup>4</sup> a Magnify YHWH with me,  
b let us exalt his name together!

Ps 34,2-4

The cohortative in v. 2a is followed by the invitation to the mouth (v. 2b, outside) and to the  $\text{nəpəš}$  (v. 3a, inside) to join the praise so that both inner and outer aspects of the speaker may take part. The invitation to other worshippers in vv. 3b-4b calls for collective worship (v. 4, יחדו / יתא). Starting with v. 2a, the praise expands from individual to collective praise.

In v. 3  $\text{nəpəš}$  refers especially to the vitality of the speaker who is to be included in the blessing of YHWH. By boasting about YHWH (v. 3a), the  $\text{nəpəš}$  increases its power to praise YHWH. At the same time, the blessing of YHWH (ברך pi., v. 2a) returns the received blessing and vitality to YHWH. The circulation of vitality by blessing YHWH can be found in Psalms 103 and 104, as we will see below.

4. *Oneself as another: Ps 27,14*

Psalm 27 is a dubious case of soliloquy because there is no explicit talking to the heart, but I think it is worthy of discussion. Whereas individual lament psalms usually progress from lament to confidence, Psalm 27 turns the ordinary structure upside down, beginning with confidence and ending without the usual vow of praise. Psalm 27 begins like a psalm of confidence in vv. 1-6, but in vv. 7-14 it suddenly turns into an individual lament psalm, starting with an invocation and continuing with an address to God (v. 7). This inconsistency has been frequently resolved by literary criticism. Some scholars suppose that vv. 1-6 might have been a royal psalm of thanksgiving and confidence to which a lament psalm was added<sup>37</sup>. In any case, I would like to focus on the present shape of the text. In particular,

<sup>37</sup> See WEBER, *Werkbuch I*, 140-141.

the second part of the psalm is of interest for the concept of person since v. 8 deals with a talking heart — a heart speaking to God:

- <sup>8</sup> a To you my heart has spoken (אמר לבי): “Seek my face”!  
 b Your face, YHWH, I am seeking. Ps 27,8

The speaking heart reminds YHWH of a word he had previously spoken <sup>38</sup>. The speaker immediately implements this word of God, confessing: “Your face, YHWH, I am seeking”. The speech of the heart is portrayed positively here, in contrast to Psalm 10. The affirmation of trust in v. 10 prepares for the turn to certainty:

- <sup>10</sup> a Even if my father and my mother abandon me,  
 b YHWH takes me in. Ps 27,10

However, the lament in vv. 7-14 does not end as usual with a confession of praise in the first person singular. Instead, it closes with a surprising change in the person addressed in the expression of confidence in v. 13 and the final verse:

- <sup>13</sup> If I were not sure to behold the good of YHWH  
 in the land of the living ...!  
<sup>14</sup> Abide for YHWH! Have courage, and make your heart strong,  
 and abide for YHWH. Ps 27,13-14

In v. 14 the speaker unexpectedly addresses another person in second person singular, who can be neither YHWH nor the enemies. For this reason, H.J. Kraus regards v. 14 as a priestly oracle of salvation, spoken by a religious authority <sup>39</sup>. However, it is more likely that the speaker speaks to himself as he would to another person in order to encourage himself to wait for YHWH. This is surprising, but it is presumably intended as a stylistic device. By speaking in the second person singular, the audience is implicitly addressed as well, and, in this way, v. 14 constitutes a dramatic conclusion to the psalm.

5. *Invitation to the næpæš to praise (imperative): “Bless YHWH, my næpæš (ברכי נפשי את־יהוה)!”*

“Bless YHWH, my soul” is presumably the best-known self-encouragement to praise God in the psalms. It is found with slight variations in Ps 103,1a.22b and Ps 104,1aα.35bα, where it has a framing function. Thus,

<sup>38</sup> In the OT there is no divine discourse that corresponds verbatim to Ps 27,8a; similar calls, however, can be found in texts such as Ps 105,4; 1 Chr 16,11; Zeph 2,3; Isa 55,6; Amos 5,6.

<sup>39</sup> KRAUS, *Psalmen*, 227.

the core parts of Psalms 103 and 104 might be understood as a reply to the initial invitation to praise, being a blessing of YHWH by the *naepæš*.

Ps 103

- <sup>1</sup> a From David. Bless YHWH, my *naepæš*,  
b and all that is within me <sup>40</sup> [bless] his holy name!
- <sup>2</sup> a Bless YHWH, my *naepæš*,  
b and do not forget all his benefits! —
- <sup>3</sup> a who forgives all your errors,  
b who heals all your diseases,
- <sup>4</sup> a who redeems from the grave your life,  
b who crowns you with grace and mercy,
- <sup>5</sup> a who satisfies your duration <sup>41</sup> with good [things].  
b your youth regenerates like that of a vulture.  
[...]
- <sup>20</sup> a Bless YHWH, his messengers, strong heroes who execute his word,  
b that one hears the sound of his word!
- <sup>21</sup> a Bless YHWH, all his hosts,  
b his servants who do his will.
- <sup>22</sup> a Bless YHWH, all his works in all places of his dominion!  
b Bless YHWH, my *naepæš*! Hallelujah!

Ps 104

- <sup>1</sup> a Bless YHWH, my *naepæš*!  
b YHWH, my God, you are very great!  
With majesty and splendour you are clothed.  
[...]
- <sup>35</sup> a May the sinners be consumed from the earth and the wicked be no more.  
b Bless YHWH, my *naepæš*! Hallelujah!

The discussion of which of these verses can be traced back to editorial work is significant with regard to the composition of the psalter. “Bless YHWH, my *naepæš*!” (v. 1a) is continued in v. 1b, and is repeated in v. 2a. Further, the performance of praise in vv. 3-6 is attached syntactically to vv. 1-2. All in all, the phrases “Bless YHWH, my *naepæš*!” in vv. 1a, 2a are a necessary part of the Psalm. However, it is disputed whether Ps 103,22b was part of the original psalm, for after the call to praise made to the court of YHWH (vv. 20-21) and all his works (v. 22a), v. 22b has an anti-climactic effect. On the other hand, the resumption of the same formulation at the end is widespread in the psalms. Besides, it is consistent to also include the whole person of the speaker in the praise, after the praise of all other works of creation. Beyond that, this conclusion might be regarded as a final invitation to continue praising YHWH.

<sup>40</sup> The unusual plural form קרבי ought not to be emended (*pace* KRAUS, *Psalmen*, 871), for it stresses the complexity of the inner life of the speaker; see A.-C. FISS, “*Lobe den Herrn, meine Seele*”. Ps 103 in seinen Kontexten (WMANT 156; Göttingen 2019) 33.

<sup>41</sup> For the emendation עודי instead of עריך, see the discussion by FISS, *Lobe*, 99-101.

Ps 104,1a, however, seems to be a quote from Psalm 103, and it is not connected to the following text. Especially within v. 35, the desire to destroy the enemies in v. 35a and the final blessing in v. 35b clash particularly hard. Thus, vv. 1a and 35b presumably trace back to an editorial connection with Psalm 103<sup>42</sup>. Nevertheless, Psalm 104 is also permeated with the idea of returning blessings received to YHWH. Therefore, the editorial framing should not only be regarded as a compositional device but also as an integral part of the overall meaning of Psalm 104.

It is disputed whether the piel form of *ברך נפשי* in *ברך* has to be understood in the sense of “blessing”. Annette Krüger, in her monograph on Psalm 104, held that it has to be translated as “praise” for 104,1a since it belongs to the introduction of a hymn, where the community is regularly invited to praise<sup>43</sup>. On the other hand, different verbs of praise in psalm introductions are used to stress distinct aspects, and it may be asked which one is emphasized by using the piel of *ברך* instead of the piel of *גדל* or *רום* in hifil, etc. According to Martin Leuenberger, the piel of *ברך* refers to actions or expressions that convey life assurance, life enhancement and salvific power, and it is used in the same way for both humans and deities<sup>44</sup>. Because the blessing still has the character of a response, Ann-Cathrin Fiss is right to stress the “Asymmetrie in der Reziprozität”<sup>45</sup>. Thus, *ברך* pi. relates here to the returning of received vitality, as a “Baustein in der Inganghaltung einer heilvollen Beziehung zwischen ihm [YHWH] und seinem Volk”<sup>46</sup>. In sum, both psalms in their final shaping exalt God with the intention to give back the blessings that have been received.

This interpretation is supported by the notion of *naḫæš*, which is closely connected to vitality or the need to receive the life force from God<sup>47</sup>. The *naḫæš* can sink down into the realm of Sheol and be brought up again by God (Ps 30,4, *עלה* hi.). The term *naḫæš* can mean the life of a person which can be returned by God (Ps 19,8, *שוב* hi.; Ps 23,3, *שוב* pol.). Hence, the *naḫæš* is the appropriate recipient of the invitation to return received

<sup>42</sup> See FISS, *Lobe*, 310; J. GÄRTNER, *Die Geschichtspsalmen*. Eine Studie zu den Psalmen 78, 105, 106 und 136 als hermeneutische Schlüsseltexte im Psalter (FAT 84; Tübingen 2012) 280.

<sup>43</sup> See A. KRÜGER, *Das Lob des Schöpfers*. Studien zu Sprache, Motivik und Theologie von Psalm 104 (WMANT 124; Neukirchen 2010) 95-96.

<sup>44</sup> M. LEUENBERGER, *Segen und Segenstheologien im alten Israel*. Untersuchungen zu ihren religions- und theologiegeschichtlichen Konstellationen und Transformationen (AThANT 90; Zürich 2008) 481-482.

<sup>45</sup> FISS, *Lobe*, 60.

<sup>46</sup> FISS, *Lobe*, 61.

<sup>47</sup> See above: III. The Addressees: *נפש* and *לב / לבב*.

vitality to YHWH by praise in Pss 103,1a.22b; 104,1aα.35bα<sup>48</sup>. This is realized in Psalm 103 by not forgetting but remembering the benefits of YHWH, as v. 2b suggests, and by recounting them loudly, as in the hymn that follows (vv. 3-19). In vv. 3-5, the praise of YHWH's deeds continues to be addressed to the *naepæš* (2<sup>nd</sup> sg. f.) to remind it of YHWH's ceaseless forgiveness, healing and redemption.

In addition to the *naepæš* in v. 1b, all within the person (כל־קרבי) is included in the return of the blessing in v. 1b. Verse 1b refers to the multifaceted interior of the person, hence, to a spatial aspect. Verse 2b, on the other hand, refers to the whole of YHWH's benefactions — a temporal aspect, namely, continual remembrance.

1b spatial / interior

2b temporal / exterior: YHWH

According to Psalm 104, YHWH bestows growth, prosperity and good order on creation; the perception of God's life-supporting order delights the *naepæš* and gives it vitality, and so the speaker asks YHWH to rejoice in this work. The praise of the good order given by God is partially a return of the received blessing. The speaker asks his or her *naepæš* to bless YHWH and launches a circulation of blessing.

Elsewhere, the invitation to praise with ברך pi. is addressed to other worshippers (Pss 68,27; 96,2; 100,4; 134,1; 135,19-20) and, sometimes, to Gentiles (Ps 66,8). Thus, the invitation of the *naepæš* to join the praise stems from the invitation to praise usually extended to the cultic community. Here, however, it is answered with the performance of praise by an individual with all of his or her vitality.

A formulation that alludes to the framing of Psalms 103 and 104 can also be found in the introduction to Psalm 146, the first psalm in the concluding Hallel of the Psalter (Psalms 146–150)<sup>49</sup>. Here הלל is used in piel, which is obviously more fitting to the great Hallel at the end of the Psalter. The allusion to Psalms 103–104 is emphasized by the almost verbatim resumption of Ps 104,33 in Ps 146,2, only altered by the use of הלל pi. instead of שיר in Ps 104,33.

<sup>1</sup> Halleluja! Praise YHWH, my *naepæš*!

<sup>2</sup> a I want to praise YHWH by my life,

b I want to sing to my God as long as I am.

Ps 146,1-2

<sup>48</sup> For *naepæš* as the subject of blessing see also Gen 27,4.19.25.31.

<sup>49</sup> See HOSSFELD – ZENGER, *Psalmen*, 881-882; E. BALLHORN, *Zum Telos des Psalters*. Der Textzusammenhang des Vierten und Fünften Psalmenbuches (Ps 90–150) (BBB 138; Berlin 2004) 304.



Psalm 146, however, is framed not by a repeated invitation to praise by the *nəpəš*, as in Psalms 103 and 104, but by הלל־יה (Ps 146,1.10). The invitation to the *nəpəš* to praise is developed further from the invitation הלל, a formula appearing in the composition of the psalter for the first time in Ps 104,35, connecting it with Psalms 105 + 106, 111 + 112, the Egyptian Hallel in Psalms 113–118 and the concluding Hallel in Psalms 146–150 where this formula is also used<sup>50</sup>. Thus, הלל־יה seems to be an important structural element of the composition of the psalter rather than a spontaneous exclamation or a cultic formula. In sum, the soliloquies to the *nəpəš* in Psalms 103, 104 and 146 each launch an eloquent praise of YHWH.

6. *Encouraging the nəpəš*: “Why are you bowed down, my *nəpəš*?” (Pss 42,6.12; 43,5)

The most striking dialogue with one’s own *nəpəš* is the refrain encompassing Psalms 42 and 43: “Das Besondere an Ps 42 ist nun, dass der Beter seiner eigenen *nəpəš* gegenübertritt”<sup>51</sup>. The assignment to the individual lament psalms is nearly undisputed<sup>52</sup>. However, the unity of Psalms 42–43 is still under discussion<sup>53</sup> — after all, Codex Leningradensis and LXX testify to two separate psalms<sup>54</sup>. On the other hand, Psalm 43 would then be the only psalm in Psalms 42–72 (MT) without

<sup>50</sup> Pss 104,35; 105,45; 106,48; 111,1; 112,1; 113,1.9; 115,18; 116,19; 117,1-2; 135,1.3.21; 146,1.10; 147,1.20; 148,1.7.14; 149,1.9; 150,1.6.

<sup>51</sup> JANOWSKI, “Die lebendige *nəpəš*”, 103.

<sup>52</sup> J. SCHAPER, *Wie der Hirsch lechzt nach frischem Wasser*. Studien zu Psalm 42/43 in Religionsgeschichte, Theologie, und kirchlichen Praxis (BTS 63; Neukirchen-Vluyn 2004) 24-27, views Psalm 42/43 as a pilgrimage psalm. Considering the structure and content, Psalm 42/43 is rather an individual lament psalm permeated by pilgrimage motifs.

<sup>53</sup> See esp. T. DOCKNER, “*Sicut cerva ...*”. Text, Struktur und Bedeutung von Psalm 42 und 43 (St. Ottilien 2001) 23-26 (in favour of cohesiveness); T. AOKI, “*Wann darf ich kommen und schauen das Angesicht Gottes?*” Untersuchungen zur Zusammengehörigkeit beziehungsweise Eigenständigkeit von Ps 42 und Ps 43 (ATM 23; Berlin 2011) 15-48 (against cohesiveness).

<sup>54</sup> E. ZENGER, “‘Erhebe dich doch als Hilfe für uns!’ Die Komposition Ps 42-44; 46-48 als theologische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Exil”, *Berührungspunkte*. Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israels und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift R. Albertz (ed. I. KOTTSEPER) (Münster 2008) 295-316, 303-308; E. ZENGER, “Innerbiblische und nachbiblische Leseweisen des Psalmenpaares 42/43”, *Jewish and Christian Approaches to Psalms* (eds. M. GROHMANN – Y. ZAKOVITCH) (HBS 57; Freiburg i.Br. 2009) 31-55, here 31-36, holds that Psalm 42 was extended with Psalm 43 to create a twin psalm like Psalm 111/112. The slight differences in motifs, however, do not suffice to be convincing. YHWH appearing as judge only in Psalm 43, for instance, is plausible considering the progression of the text from lament to hope of justification.

a heading (except for Psalm 71) <sup>55</sup>. Moreover, the recurring verses 42,6.12 and 43,6, along with numerous literal repetitions, substantiate its unity, as does the progression from lament to certainty in Psalms 42–43, which is typical for a psalm of lament. Accordingly, Psalm 42/43 is regarded here as one single psalm <sup>56</sup>. Since the text is of particular importance to our question, it is presented here in its entirety.

- 42 <sup>1</sup> To the music director. A Maskil of the Corachites.  
<sup>2</sup> As a deer pants <sup>57</sup> on a river bed <sup>58</sup>,  
 so my *nəpəš* pants for you, God <sup>59</sup>!  
<sup>3</sup> My *nəpəš* has thirsted for God, for the living God. When shall I enter  
 and see the face of God <sup>60</sup>?  
<sup>4</sup> My tears have become my food by day and by night  
 while they are saying all day long: where is your God?  
<sup>5</sup> This is what I want to remember and I pour out my *nəpəš* above me;  
 How I pass over to the hut <sup>61</sup>, I walk with them <sup>62</sup> to the house of God,  
 at the shout of joy <sup>63</sup> and thanksgiving, a celebrating crowd.  
<sup>6</sup> Why are you bowed down <sup>64</sup>, my *nəpəš*, and why are you groaning against me?  
 Wait for God! For I will again thank him  
 for the rescues (coming) through his face <sup>65</sup>.  
<sup>7</sup> My God, bowed down upon me is my *nəpəš*;  
 that is why I remember you from the land of Jordan and Hermon, from Mount Miz'ar.

<sup>55</sup> For Psalm 42/43 in the Psalter context, see ZENGER, “Hilfe”, 303-314; ZENGER, “Leseweisen”, 36-40; SCHAPER, *Hirsch*, 28-46; for the reception history of Psalm 42/43, see, *inter alios*, ZENGER, “Leseweisen”, 41-52; SCHAPER, *Hirsch*, 92-102.

<sup>56</sup> DOCKNER, *Sicut Cerva*, 21-29; SCHAPER, *Hirsch*, 14-17, et al.

<sup>57</sup> The only other evidence of עָרַב is Joel 1,20, which is also about screaming over dried riverbeds.

<sup>58</sup> אֶפְיָקִי יָם in Ps 18,16 (and par.) refers to the exposed seabed; Joel 1,20 and Joel 4,18 show the significance of an empty or, as the case may be, full riverbed.

<sup>59</sup> The alleged editorial replacement of YHWH by Elohim is not taken into account in these text-critical comments.

<sup>60</sup> The Nif'al vocalization of the MT avoids the idea that one can see God's face (amendment “for dogmatic reasons”); the presumably original Qal form, however, often refers to a temple visit.

<sup>61</sup> Presumably, instead of the uncertain סֶךְ, the lexeme סוּךְ (“hut”) is to be conjectured, which also refers to the temple in Lam 2,6.

<sup>62</sup> אָדָם can be understood as 1<sup>st</sup> per. sg. c. hitp. ipf. + suff. 3. m. pl. of דָּדָה (walk), but this remains uncertain.

<sup>63</sup> קוֹל רִנָּה occurs in Ps 30,6 (the cheer after salvation), in Ps 47,2 (cultic cheer of the peoples), in Ps 118,15 (cultic cheer on the occasion of a Toda-offering), and in Ps 126,2 (cheer of the liberated).

<sup>64</sup> For the שִׁיחַ hitpol. Gesenius (18<sup>th</sup> edition) specifies “to be bowed”. The evidence in Qal (Ps 44,26 and Lam 3,20) points to “to dissolve”, but both remain uncertain.

<sup>65</sup> Pss 42,12 and 43,5 differ from Ps 42,6 merely by the repetition of מִנִּי and defective spelling of שְׁׁוֹעֵת; moreover, 42,6 has “the rescues (coming) through his face”, while 42,12 and 43,5 have “rescues of my face”. KRAUS, *Psalmen*, 317, alters 42,6 corresponding to 42,12; 43,5. However, the “rescue (coming) from God” might have in the course of Psalm 42 turned out to be for the speaker “the rescue of my face”.

- <sup>8</sup> Deep flood calls deep flood at the roar of your torrents,  
all your breakers and your waves have gone over me.
- <sup>9</sup> By day YHWH will command his kindness and by night his song (Q) will be  
with me,  
a prayer to the god of my life.
- <sup>10</sup> I will say to God, my rock, "For what reason did you forget me?  
For what reason do I go mourning, oppressed by the enemy"?
- <sup>11</sup> As murder within my bones my enemies are taunting,  
saying all day long: Where is your god?
- <sup>12</sup> Why are you bowed down, my *nəpəš*, and why are you groaning against me?  
Wait for God! For I will again thank him —  
my rescuer and my God.
- 43 <sup>1</sup> Vindicate me <sup>66</sup>, God, and defend my case against an unfaithful people!  
You may deliver me from the deceitful and evil man!
- <sup>2</sup> For you are the god of my refuge. For what reason have you rejected me?  
Why do I walk around mourning, oppressed by the enemy?
- <sup>3</sup> Send out your light and your truth;  
they will lead me;  
they will bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling places.
- <sup>4</sup> And I will come to the altar of God,  
to the God of my exceeding joy <sup>67</sup>,  
and I will thank you on the lyre, God, my God.
- <sup>5</sup> Why are you bowed down, my *nəpəš*, and why are you groaning against me?  
Wait for God! For I will again thank him —  
rescues of my face and my God.

Psalms 42/43 exhibits a threefold structure <sup>68</sup>:

42,1 Superscription	key words (section)	key words (overall Psalm)
I 42,2-6 Longing for God's Presence		
2-4 Description of Trouble		
2a-4a Description of Trouble: Self	נפשי פנה	
4b Description of Trouble: God		
5 Confidence	נפשי	עבר
6 Refrain: Soliloquy	נפשי פנה	

<sup>66</sup> The heading *ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ* in LXX has advanced the division of the Psalm into Psalms 42 and 43.

<sup>67</sup> The hendiadys in the MT is a rhetorical device; it does not have to be changed because it is "overloaded", as KRAUS, *Psalmen*, 318, suggests.

<sup>68</sup> See the structural analysis in P. AUFFRET, *Hymnes d'Égypte et d'Israël. Études de structures littéraires* (OBO 34; Fribourg 1981) which is too artificial in detail but commendable in view of the internal structure of the individual verses as well as that of the psalm-spanning keywords.

42,1 Superscription	key words (section)	key words (overall Psalm)
II 42,7-12 Complaint, remote from God		
7f Description of Trouble	נפשי עלי שיה	
7 Description of Trouble: Self		הר
8 Description of Trouble: God		עבר
9 Confidence		
10f Description of Trouble		
10a Description of Trouble: God		
10b-11 Description of Trouble: Foes		
12 Refrain: Soliloquy	נפשי עלי שיה	
III 43,1-5 Petition for Guidance to the Sanctuary		
1 Petition	אלהים	
2aa Confidence		
2aβ-b Description of Trouble: God / Foes		
3 Petition		הר בוא
4 Vow of Praise		בוא
5 Refrain: Soliloquy	אלהים	

The symbolic geography of the text and the movement through space are crucial for an understanding of the psalm. The speaker finds him or herself remote from God and His sanctuary in the realm of the northernmost part of Israel / Palestine at Mount Mizar (הר מצער, 42,7). The speaker is longing to pass over (עבר, 42,5) again together with other pilgrims, to be led (בוא hi., 43,3) to the holy mountain of God (הר קדשך, 43,5) and to enter (בוא, 43,4) the sanctuary. The water imagery is also striking: in vv. 2 and 3, the *nəpæš* is longing for God like a thirsty deer, but in the second stanza, it almost drowns in a sudden flood<sup>69</sup>. Perhaps we have to imagine a flash flood pouring through a dried wadi in the desert.

<sup>69</sup> W.P. BROWN, “‘Night to Night,’ ‘Deep to Deep’. The Discourse of Creation in the Psalms”, *My Words Are Lovely*. Studies in the Rhetoric of the Psalms (ed. R.L. FOSTER) (LHB/OTS 467; New York 2008) 63-74, understands the flood of 42,8a as a symbol of the overwhelming experience of a cosmic worship, a “mysterium fascinans et tremendum”. His argumentation, however, is based only on the similarity to Ps 19,3 and on the positively drawn crowd in 42,5, and he neglects the generally negative connotation of תהום as an element of a chaotic counter-world and the concrete imagery in 42,8: floods of water and waves (42,8b) rushing over the speaker can hardly be meant as life-giving. Furthermore, the similarity to Jonah 2,4 and Ps 88,7-8 are pertinent for the understanding of this passage.

Of course, the refrain is central to our discussion of soliloquy, but its relationship to the overall psalm needs to be considered as well. The psalm is dominated by repetitions <sup>70</sup>. Not only is the refrain in 42,6.12 and 43,5 repeated but so too is the lament about the foes in 42,4a, which is reproduced almost verbatim in 42,11. The text in 42,10 also corresponds almost literally with 43,2: it contains the repeated question introduced with *למה* as well as the recurring words *איב, לחץ, קדר, הלך, למה*.

Several keywords in the refrain (42,6.12; 43,12) emphasize its strong connection to the whole of the psalm: *נפש*, *המה*, *עלי* and *אלהים*. One keyword is *נפש* (42,2b.3a.5a.6a.7a.12a). The longing of the *נפש* (42,2b.3a), which is very agitated (5a.6a.7a.12a), is a key motif of the psalm. It is the *nəpəš* that is longing for water, food and vitality. The human being as *nəpəš* is dependent on the living God (see *אל חי*, 42,3.9) to receive its elementary needs. Therefore, it is consistent that the deepest longing of the *nəpəš* is for divine presence, which the speaker as *nəpəš* hopes to experience in the temple. The personal presence is expressed by another keyword, namely *פנים*. Another keyword, *המון* in 42,5, refers to the joyful shouting pilgrims, whereas, at the moment, it is just the lonely *nəpəš* that is noisy (see *המה* in 42,6.12; 43,5). The frequent use of *עלי* (42,5.6.7.8.12; 43,5) is also significant. The formulation, “I pour out my *nəpəš* above me” in 42,5, is surprising, because elsewhere the *nəpəš* is poured out (*שפך*) before (*לפני*) God <sup>71</sup>. However, as the face of God is far away, the speaker has to pour the *nəpəš* out upon *him or herself*. The refrain talks about the groaning of the *nəpəš* within the speaker (*עלי*; 42,6.12; 43,5), and 42,7a says that the *nəpəš* has bowed down upon the speaker (*עלי*), corresponding to the floods of God streaming over it (*עלי*) (42,8b). It may come as no surprise that *אלהים* occurs many times (42,2.3.4.5.6.7.11.12; 43,1.2.4.5) in the middle of the Elohist Psalter. However, in the refrain as well as in context (42,4.7.11; 43,2), the personal God is referred to frequently. The living God (*אל חי*, 42,3a) is at the same time the “God of my life” (*אל חי*, 42,9b), “God, my rock” (*אל סלעי*, 42,10) and the “God of my exceeding joy” (*אל שמחת גילי*, 43,4a).

The interrelationship between the refrain in 42,6 and its context is also emphasized by the word *זכר* in the framing verses 42,5.7. *זכר* makes no clear reference to the past but does refer to the visualization of arriving at the sanctuary (42,5) and the experience of divine presence (42,7), in

<sup>70</sup> The comparison in 42,2 is stressed by repetition of *ערג*; 42,3a is connected chainlike to 42,2b, like a further parallelism etc.

<sup>71</sup> In 1 Sam 1,15, Hannah pours out her *נפש* before YHWH; similarly, Ps 62,9 encourages one to pour out his/her heart before YHWH; Pss 102,1 and 142,3 speak of pouring out the thoughts. For *שפך* see also JANOWSKI, “Die lebendige *nəpəš*”, 103-104.

spite of the temporal or spatial distance. These verses presuppose imagination and reflection <sup>72</sup>. Thus, the soliloquy in 42,6 may not come as such a surprise. Nevertheless, in an individual lament psalm, it is unusual that the speaker addresses himself rather than God. Instead of an appeal to God for intervention, he calls the *nəpəš* to wait for God. By contrast, in Ps 35,3b, the speaker asks YHWH to speak to the *nəpəš*, as in Ps 35,3b:

Say to my *nəpəš*: I am your salvation.

*Ps 35,3b*

In Psalm 42/43, God is supposed to be absent, and so the speaker must speak to him or herself for consolation and encouragement. In addition, he mostly speaks about God in the third person.

The question in the first part of the refrain (42,6a.12a; 43,5a: “Why are you bowed down <sup>73</sup>, my *nəpəš*, and why are you groaning against me?”) is not seeking information, nor is it a rhetorical question or a reproach. It is rather the kind of question that counselors ask, similar to God’s question in Gen 3,9: Where are you? 42,6b turns to a vow of praise and draws attention to the future. But even after the first soliloquy, the *nəpəš* is still bowed down (שיח hitp. / נפש, 42,6.7). The repetition of the refrain serves not only to structure the psalm but also relates to the content: a one-time self-assertion would not suffice, and so the speaker must address him or herself repeatedly in order to arrive at a final, assured vow of praise.

The function of the refrain in 42,6.12; 43,5 varies depending on the context. 42,6 realizes the commitment to keep in mind the future experience of salvation in 42,5. In 42,12, the refrain responds to the distress caused by the enemies in 42,11. Here, the scorn of the oppressor is interpreted in terms of the harm that they cause within the victim: namely, “murder” in the deepest interior, which is represented here by the bones <sup>74</sup>. Finally, after asking for guidance to the sanctuary in 43,3, verse 43,4 looks ahead to the arrival at the temple and the accompanying songs of thanksgiving. At the end, the refrain is rather a summary of this process, emphasizing the final vow of praise.

In contrast to the invitation to praise God in Psalms 34, 103, 104, and 146, the soliloquy in Psalm 42/43 is an encouragement to wait for God, which stems from the context of the vow of praise, comparable instead to Pss 13,6 and 27,14.

<sup>72</sup> A similar contemplation of the speaker is also found in Psalm 77, where verbs of the same semantic field are used: זכר in vv. 4, 7, 10, 12; שיח in vv. 4, 13; חשב in v. 6; הנה in v. 13.

<sup>73</sup> See comment above, n. 64.

<sup>74</sup> On mockery as a deadly threat to the social person, see, for instance, Ps 69,21 and A. GRUND, “‘Schmähungen der dich Schmähenden sind auf mich gefallen’. Kulturanthropologische und sozialpsychologische Aspekte von Ehre und Scham in Ps 69”, *EvTh* 71 (2012) 174-193, esp. 182-183, 188-192. KRAUS, *Psalmen*, 320, on the contrary, thinks of a deadly disease of the speaker.

## V. CONCLUSION

To return to the question raised by Robert di Vito, in a culture where people are completely lacking in “inner depths”, communication with the heart or the *naepæš* is unlikely to be articulated as deliberately in literature as we have seen above. Even if soliloquies in the psalms are not so extended, they have an important function within the text. They are centred around an invitation to praise God, as in Pss 13,6; 34,3; 103,1a.22b; 104,1a.35ba; and 146,1, or self-encouragement, as in Pss 27,14; 42,6.12.13. With the exception of Ps 36,2-4, nowhere does intrapersonal conversation show a trend towards a *homo incurvatus in se ipsum*. The lexemes used here for mental and psychic powers originally signified a part of the body (נפש) or an organ (לב), but in the texts discussed they are understood as personal powers to bless God or to wait for God, representing aspects of the whole person. Communication with them is modelled on communication with other people; internal relations are conceived of as corresponding to social relations. The occurrence of praise of God and of encouragement to wait for God suggests that the relationship to God affected the verbalization of an explicit and introspective self-reference by means of the Israelite prayer tradition.

Finally, the results ought to be placed within a broader context. For many of the texts discussed above, a postexilic dating is likely. Is soliloquy hence characteristic of a self-reflectivity arising only in the post-exilic era in Israel? In light of the literature on the Ancient Near East and Egypt, soliloquies and other testimonies of self-reflectivity are not phenomena merely dating back to the second half of the first century B.C.E. Self-talk in a psychological sense is well exemplified by Old Babylonian omen texts<sup>75</sup>. Moreover, soliloquy as a literary device presupposes an even more profound reflection. Already the Egyptian “Dialogue of a Man and His Ba” from the Middle Kingdom (Twelfth Dynasty; about 1900 B.C.E.)<sup>76</sup> contains an extensive literary dialogue with one’s own soul, in which the Ba itself appears as an active dialogue partner. In numerous Akkadian texts, at least since Old Babylonian times, someone speaks (*dabābu*; *qabû*; *zakāru*) in (*ina*), with (*itti*) or to (*ana*) his heart (*libbišu*, or *šurrišu*) or

<sup>75</sup> D.O. EDZARD, “Selbstgespräch und Monolog in der akkadischen Literatur”, *Lingering over Words*. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran (eds. T. ABUSCH – J. HUEHNERGARD – P. STEINKELLER) (HSS 37; Atlanta, GA 1990) 149-162, esp. 150-151.

<sup>76</sup> See A. ERMAN, *Gespräch eines Lebensmüden mit seiner Seele*. Aus dem Papyrus 3024 der Königlichen Museen (Berlin 1896); W. BARTA, *Das Gespräch eines Mannes mit seinem Ba* (Papyrus Berlin 3024) (MÄS 18; Berlin 1969); J.P. ALLEN, *The Debate Between a Man and His Soul*. A Masterpiece of Ancient Egyptian Literature (Leiden 2010).



advises (*malāku*) his or her heart. It is clearly a stylistic device in the Gilgameš, Anzu and Etana epic <sup>77</sup>. Sumerian texts, such as the Gudea cylinder from the twenty-second century B.C.E., already made use of soliloquy as a stylistic device. Thus, it is not surprising that Hittite, Ugaritic and eventually Israelite texts did as well. In the psalms, as we have seen, Israelite prayers make great use of this stylistic device <sup>78</sup>. Since texts in antiquity were recited mostly aloud in public, soliloquy was performed and dramatized and, hence, became not only a *mental* but even a deliberate *cultural* technique.

Carol Newsom has recently shown that prayers in the Qumran literature already attested to a radical transformation in the conception of the self, as compared to that in the psalms <sup>79</sup>. Indeed, the alteration of known psalm motifs is obvious. For example, the *torah* has not only to be written upon the heart, as in Ps 40,9, but also onto the kidneys, as in *Barkhi nafshi* / 4Q 436 I I 6, in order to reach even deeper regions of the person. Nevertheless, many of the anthropological motifs mentioned by C. Newsom seem to be more deeply rooted in post-exilic psalm literature (esp. Psalms 51 and 119, but also 36, 40, 42 etc.) than is acknowledged in her article. With regards to *Barkhi nafshi*, Newsom strikingly summarizes: “The self is represented as a complex psychic body whose key organs are not under his own control and whose transformation into a desired moral state requires forceful action by God on those organs. Here is inner conflict and self division not seen in preexilic texts” <sup>80</sup>.

Even if it is difficult to determine precisely which psalms are pre- or postexilic, the motif of organs appearing to develop a dangerous autonomy is rooted in the metonymical expressions already frequently used in the psalms. In addition, the negative evaluation of organs like the human heart appears in early psalms, as we have seen in the evil speeches in the hearts of the enemies in Psalm 36 and the like. Thus, there seems to be a less radical development in Israelite prayer literature from postexilic to ancient Jewish texts. Communication to an agitated *naepæš* as in Psalm 42/43 already attests to inner conflicts, though not yet to self-alienation, which, however, is closely attached to the idea of “inner depths” by C. Newsom <sup>81</sup>. Self-alienation is certainly one important aspect of a changing conception

<sup>77</sup> See EDZARD, “Selbstgespräch”, *passim*.

<sup>78</sup> For a detailed discussion, see EDZARD, “Selbstgespräch”, 158-159.

<sup>79</sup> C. NEWSOM, “Toward a Genealogy of the Introspective Self in the Second Temple Judaism”, *Functions of Psalms and Prayers in the Late Second Temple Period* (eds. M.S. PAJUNEN – J. PENNER) (BZAW 486; Berlin – Boston, MA 2017) 63-79.

<sup>80</sup> NEWSOM, “Genealogy”, 69.

<sup>81</sup> NEWSOM, “Genealogy”, 66-67.



of self, but ought not to be considered as the only criterion of an introspective self. C. Newsom plausibly points out that the self in Qumran prayer literature became weaker with regard to free decision than in postexilic psalms, with more internal and far more external forces (esp. angels and demons) affecting the self. One could even conclude that the concept of free decision and autonomy, which is assumed to be so important to modern concepts of the self<sup>82</sup>, declined after the exile, also affecting the increasingly sceptical attitude towards free decision against God attested to by Paul, Augustine and Luther. In the psalms, explicit reference to the self without devaluation of the heart or the *napæš* carries out a positive function, namely, to encourage the self to wait patiently for or to praise God.

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#### SUMMARY

Recent anthropological discussion of the concept of person in Ancient Israel has dealt with the thesis of an essay by Robert Di Vito, who claimed that in the OT the person lacks “inner depths” and is “authentic” precisely in his/her heteronomy. He assumes that in a culture where people lack “inner depths” and experience themselves as heteronomous and dependent on others, there would be no explicit interior communication within the person. This article contributes to the anthropological discussion by dealing with soliloquy in the psalms. In contrast to the psychological phenomenon of self-talk, soliloquy is a literary device that is widespread in ancient Near Eastern and OT narrative, usually marked by introductory formulae, while explicit passages in the psalms are not so frequent. This article gives an overview of the major psalms where a speaker is talking to his or her “heart” (לֵב) or “soul” (נֶפֶשׁ) and takes a closer look at their contents and contexts. These psalms dramatize the inner life of the speaker and demonstrate that he or she not only struggles with foes, illness, social isolation, divine absence or wrath, but also gets in contact with his or her inner life to balance those challenges.

<sup>82</sup> See DI VITO, “Anthropology”, 221.

## ACCUSING YHWH OF FICKLENESS: A STUDY OF PSALM 89,47-52

### I. INTRODUCTION

Psalm 89 offers in its first half (vv. 2-38) a colourful sketch of the distinctive fates of all those existing and living in the universe and in the human world. The praise of YHWH's steadfast love, faithfulness, and lordship over the cosmos is dovetailed with an elaborate portrait of YHWH's covenant with his chosen one, David, and with the joy this king and his people experience because of YHWH's covenant and loyalty. At the same time these positive events are contrasted with the fate of YHWH's opponents, Rahab and other human adversaries. Both the faithful and the opponents experience YHWH's mighty hand and arm. In the second half of the psalm (vv. 39-52), however, this picture turns into its negative through YHWH's rejection of David, his anointed one <sup>1</sup>, and his repudiation of the covenant. In this part, YHWH's hand seems to be no longer the instrument of deliverance and judgment, and instead the hand of his enemies and that of sheol turn out to be more powerful.

Because both conflicting themes are present throughout the psalm, the stance the psalmist takes towards YHWH becomes decisive. This happens twice. The first time is at the beginning of the psalm, in v. 3b, where the psalmist anticipates the negative questions and rebuts them in his own directly reported speech: "I declare: 'Your steadfast love is built forever, in the heavens you establish your faithfulness'". The second time (v. 19),

<sup>1</sup> The identification of David with "the anointed one" is visible throughout the psalm: in YHWH's directly reported speeches in vv. 4-5a ("I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David, I will establish your offspring forever"); in vv. 20-21 ("I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David, my servant, anointed him with my sacred oil"); in the same direct speech in vv. 28-30 ("I will appoint him first-born, highest of the kings of the earth. I will maintain my steadfast love for him always, my covenant with him shall endure. I will establish his line forever, his throne, as long as the heavens last"); and in vv. 35-37 ("I will not violate my covenant, or change what I have uttered. I have sworn by my holiness, once and for all; I will not be false to David. His line shall continue forever, his throne as the sun before me"). At the end of the psalm, vv. 50 and 52, the psalmist refers to all these elements: "where is your steadfast love of old you swore to David in your faithfulness?" and "how your enemies, O YHWH, have flung abuse, abuse at your anointed at every step". (The translations are the NJPS's, with the exception of the tetragrammaton.) In other words: "my servant", "the chosen one", "the anointed one", "the king", all refer to David. To him YHWH offers the covenant and his faithful and steadfast love.

in the middle of the first part, he presents his view in an indirect narrator's text. He first shares with his audience the joy they feel when they confide in the name of YHWH. And then he openly participates in their confession: "Truly *our* shield is of YHWH, *our* king, of the Holy One of Israel" (v. 19). Thus the psalmist associates himself with the audience at the same time that the indirect narrator's text invites the audience to join in this praise.

These acts of faith and worship stand in sharp contrast to the furious attack of the psalmist in vv. 39-40: "You have rejected, spurned and become enraged at your anointed. You have repudiated the covenant with your servant". Although not phrased as accusations, the subsequent series of questions is incriminating: "How long, YHWH, will you hide forever?" (v. 47), and "Where are your deeds of steadfast love of old, O Lord?" (v. 50). These pointed questions are followed by an outcry for help against the abuse the enemies have inflicted on YHWH's anointed one (v. 52). Thus the psalm seems to end in despair, as if the psalmist cannot understand YHWH's inconsistent behaviour. What is the meaning of this psalm's ending? I hope to answer this question by a syntactic, semantic, and rhetorical study of the final sections of the text <sup>2</sup>.

## II. THE POSITION OF VV. 47-52 IN PSALM 89

Although this long psalm displays various antithetical lines and themes, it nevertheless forms one composition whose structure is widely discussed. Based on the pioneering work of Hermann Gunkel, form-critical researchers in the twentieth century distinguished the three genres present in Psalm 89 as hymn, oracle, and complaint <sup>3</sup>. In their view, these genres reflected three stages of a redactional process, which they came to treat as virtually separate poems <sup>4</sup>. Later on, attention was paid to the question

<sup>2</sup> The aim of this article, therefore, is to offer a synchronic analysis of Psalm 89 as a literary unit focusing on the last episode, not a diachronic (source- and tradition-critical, redaction-historical, religion-historical, linguistic-historical) study. It does not contribute to the debate on the (possible) historical dating of the psalm, on Psalm 89's position in the entire psalter (canonical criticism) or in the Messianic psalter (redactional criticism); nor does it discuss the intertextual relations with other psalms (intertextual criticism). All these aspects fall outside the scope of the present study.

<sup>3</sup> H. GUNKEL, *Einleitung in die Psalmen* (HKAT; Göttingen 1926, <sup>2</sup>1933); English translation: *The Psalms. A Form-Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia, PA 1967).

<sup>4</sup> Based on T. VEIJOLA, "Davidverheißung und Staatsvertrag. Beobachtungen zum Einfluss altorientalischer Staatsverträge auf die biblische Sprache am Beispiel von Psalm 89", ZAW 95 (1983) 9-31. See also: F.-L. HOSSFELD – E. ZENGER, *Psalmen 51–100. Übersetzt und ausgelegt* (HThKAT; Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2000, <sup>3</sup>2015) 581-585; English

of liturgical setting <sup>5</sup>. From the 1980s onwards, literary studies emphasized the affinities between the various parts, their conceptual and structural coherence <sup>6</sup>. This unified composition was further described as a coherent poem of lament <sup>7</sup>, as a prophetic complaint about the fulfillment of an oracle <sup>8</sup>, or as an angry reproach <sup>9</sup>. At present, the distinction between the praise in vv. 2-38 and the complaint or accusation in vv. 39-52 is accepted by all <sup>10</sup>. On the other hand, in his structuralist study of Psalm 89, Hans Ulrich Steymans describes the semantic structure of the psalm not in terms of praise and complaint, but as an alternation of contract (*Kontrakt*) and testing (*Prüfung*), and in his view this alternation returns in the last episode <sup>11</sup>. With regard to the composition and unity of the last part, it appears

translation: *Psalms 2. A Commentary on Psalms 51–100* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Based on S. MOWINCKEL, *Psalmenstudien III. Kultprophetie und kultprophetische Psalmen* (Kristiania 1923; reprinted Amsterdam 1961), other scholars further elaborate on Psalm 89's liturgical setting, namely G.W. AHLSTROM, *Psalm 89. Eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des leidenden Königs* (Lund 1959); J.M. WARD, "The Literary Form and Liturgical Background of Psalm LXXXIX", *VT* 11 (1961) 321-339; J.-B. DUMORTIER, "Un rituel d'intronisation: Le Ps. lxxxix 2-38", *VT* 22 (1972) 176-196; and H.-J. KRAUS, *Psalmen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn <sup>5</sup>1978) 783-785; English translation: *Psalms 60–150* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 1989) 202-204.

<sup>6</sup> In chronological order: R.J. CLIFFORD, "Psalm 89: A Lament over the Davidic Ruler's Continued Failure", *HTR* 73 (1980) 35-47; D. PARDEE, "The Semantic Parallelism of Psalm 89", *In the Shelter of Elyon. Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström* (eds. W. BOYD BARRICK – J.R. SPENCER) (JSOTSup 31; Sheffield 1984) 121-137; M.H. FLOYD, "Psalm 89: A Prophetic Complaint about the Fulfillment of an Oracle", *VT* 42 (1992) 442-457; A. CAQUOT, "Observations sur le psaume 89", *Sem* XLI-XLII (1993) 133-158; P. AUFFRET, *Merveilles à nos yeux. Étude structurelle de vingt psaumes dont celui de 1Ch 16,8-36* (Berlin 1995); N.M. SARNA, "Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis", *Studies in Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia, PA 2000) 377-394; J.F.D. CREACH, "The Mortality of the King in Psalm 89 and Israel's Postexilic Identity", *Constituting the Community. Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride Jr.* (eds. J.T. STRONG – S.S. TUELL) (Winona Lake, IN 2005) 237-249; M.W. MITCHELL, "Genre Disputes and Communal Accusatory Laments: Reflections on the Genre of Psalm LXXXIX", *VT* 55 (2005) 511-527; S. RAMOND, "La voix discordante du troisième livre du Psautier (Psaumes 74, 80, 89)", *Bib* 96 (2015) 39-66.

<sup>7</sup> See CLIFFORD, "Psalm 89".

<sup>8</sup> See FLOYD, "Psalm 89".

<sup>9</sup> See MITCHELL, "Genre Disputes".

<sup>10</sup> Cf. HOSSFELD – ZENGER, *Psalmen 51–100*, 581: "Konsens besteht seit langem in der Grobgliederung des Psalms, und zwar in seiner Dreiteilung: Hymnus V 2-19; Gottesrede V 20-38; Klage V 39-52".

<sup>11</sup> H.U. STEYMANS, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund. Eine strukturelle und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (ÖBS 27; Frankfurt am Main 2005) 254-258. He concludes (257) that the implicit author offers YHWH a contract (*Kontrakt*), both in the questions in vv. 47 and 50, and in the imperatives in vv. 48 and 51. I fail to see how the questions, "How long, YHWH, will you hide forever?" and "[How long] will your fury blaze like fire?", and the imperatives, "Remember what is a lifespan" and "Remember the abuse of your servants", correspond to the presentation of a contract.

that some scholars treat the last part as a whole <sup>12</sup>, while others divide it into three smaller sections, namely vv. 39-46, 47-49, 50-52. In his careful study of Psalm 89, Michael Floyd concludes (based on thematic distinctions) that the last two sections, vv. 47-49 and vv. 50-52, stand out against the rest of the text <sup>13</sup>. The Masoretes divided the psalm into five units, and marked the first four of them with *selahs*, viz. vv. 2-5, vv. 6-38, vv. 39-46, vv. 47-49, and vv. 50-52 (there is no *selah* after v. 52) <sup>14</sup>.

A narrative analysis of Psalm 89 confirms the distinct position of the last two sections. Whereas in vv. 39-46 the narrator addresses YHWH directly and furiously, in v. 47a the narrator starts to pose some general

<sup>12</sup> Cf. HOSSFELD – ZENGER, *Psalmen 51-100*, 596: “Der Beter schließt mit dem *Frage- und Bittabschnitt* V 47-52”. At the same time, they call vv. 48-49 an insertion (“Einschub”) and consider v. 50 a continuation of v. 47.

<sup>13</sup> See FLOYD, “Psalm 89”, 446: “The fundamental divisions in the text thus occur at v. 20 and v. 47, and not at v. 39. The basic sections can be delineated [...] as follows: vv. 2-19, a hymn of praise; vv. 20-46, a narrative of Yahweh’s past involvement with the monarchy [...]; and vv. 47-52, a reproach petitioning Yahweh for deliverance”.

<sup>14</sup> G. BARBIERO, “Alcune osservazioni sulla conclusione del Salmo 89 (vv. 47-53)”, *Bib* 88 (2007) 536-545, proposes to consider v. 53 the ending of the psalm, notwithstanding the fact that (in his words on p. 536) v. 53 is regarded “almost universally” as a redactional addition to the original psalm that signals the end of the third book in the psalm collection. BARBIERO (543) summarizes the arguments in favour of the commonly accepted redactional view as follows: (1) the rhythm of v. 53 (3+2 accents) differs from that in the rest of the psalm; (2) the references to YHWH in the entire psalm are either set in first person (when YHWH’s speeches are reported directly), or set in second person (when the psalmist addresses YHWH with “you”), whereas v. 53 speaks of YHWH in third person; (3) the obvious contrast between v. 53 (“blessing”) and the previous part in vv. 47-49 (“complaint”); and (4) the similarity to the conclusions of other psalms (Pss 41,14; 72,19; 106,48). Over and against these arguments, Barbiero justifies his own view that v. 53 is an integral part of the psalm by pointing at (1) the repetition of words in vv. 47-52 and v. 53, namely the tetragrammaton and the lexemes *אמונתך* in v. 50 and *אמן ואמן* in v. 53, and (2) the *inclusio* in the beginning of the psalm in v. 2 and its ending in v. 53, because both speak of YHWH in third person and both contain a praise or blessing. Barbiero’s arguments fail to convince me. His justification of the unity of vv. 47-53 is based on the repetition of lexemes. Yet, the lexeme *אמונתך* (“your faithfulness”) in v. 50 is a noun that qualifies YHWH’s attitude towards his servants, whereas *אמן ואמן* (“truly”) in v. 53 is a twice-used adverb that expresses the response the psalmist hopes to invoke in his audience. Barbiero builds his exegesis of the psalm mainly on his second argument about v. 2 and v. 53 marking an *inclusio*. However, the clausal structures, the verbal lexemes, the addressed persons, and the content are not at all the same, because in contrast to the verbal clause in v. 2a with the verb *שיר* in first person (“I will sing”), v. 53 is a nominal clause and the passive participle *ברוך* (“be blessed”) marks a declaration of state. Also v. 2’s reference to YHWH’s “steadfast love” (*חסד*) is missing in v. 53. Only the lexemes *עולם* (v. 2a) and *לעולם* (v. 53a) are (almost) the same. This is a very weak foundation for his argument. The reason why Barbiero defends this thesis is that he does not want the psalm to end with a complaint, but instead wishes it to conclude with a note of hope. His theological bias is clear from the English abstract on p. 545: “The anger of YHWH cannot last forever, because his fidelity to the promise he made to David lasts forever. These considerations serve to moderate an exclusively theocratic and democratic interpretation of the Psalter, restoring attention to the messianic dimension as such”.

questions (“how long?”), followed in vv. 48-49 by questions marked by the interrogatives *מה* (“what?”), *על-מה* (“on what ground/why?”), and *מי* (“who?”). This narrator’s text differs completely in tone and perspective from the previous sections. It is even more distinctive because the involved parties, this time, are not David or his people, but all human beings and every man. The final section still addresses YHWH directly, but returns again to David, the main participant.

Based on the Masoretic *selahs*, Michael Floyd’s thematic distinctions, and the narratological variation, the last two sections, vv. 47-49 and vv. 50-52, can be considered to stand out as distinct from the preceding verses in the psalm. The reason why in modern scholarship relatively less attention is paid to these final sections is that many scholars consider them to be a later addition<sup>15</sup>. In the present study I will analyse the two sections one by one, both syntactically and semantically. Subsequently I will discuss these units from a rhetorical perspective.

### III. A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF Ps 89,47-49

The syntactic organization of vv. 47-49 is in one respect simple and in another complicated. It is simple because each of the clauses opens explicitly or implicitly with an interrogative. Verse 47 consists of two clauses, in which the first in v. 47a starts with *עד-מה* (“until what time?” or “how long?”), while the second clause in v. 47b assumes the same interrogative. Verse 48 consists of three clauses<sup>16</sup>. The first, *זכר-אני* in v. 48a, is an imperative clause in which the personal pronoun *אני* is set in a *casus pendens* construction. Commonly a unit in *casus pendens* is placed in a fronted position, whereas here *אני* follows the verb to which it is closely linked by a *maqfef*. This irregular clause is followed in v. 48b and v. 48c by two interrogative clauses: *מה-חלד*, a nominal clause opening with *מה* (“what?”); and *על-מה-שוא בראת כל-בני-אדם*, a verbal clause opening with *על-מה* (“on account of what?” or “why?”). Verse 49 also consists of three clauses. The interrogative part of the verbal clause *מי גבר יהיה* (“what man [will live]?”) in v. 49a seems to be presupposed in

<sup>15</sup> See HOSSFELD – ZENGER, *Psalmen 51–100*, 589, who call it an “*Einschub*”, and CREACH, “The Mortality”, 238, who proposes that “Ps 89: 48–49 is a late addition to the poem intended to downplay royal efficacy by means of the king’s own testimony”. The exception is FLOYD, “Psalm 89”, 446–447, who does pay extensive attention to these verses.

<sup>16</sup> We should distinguish between a syntactic division in clauses, in which a clause is the minimal grammatical unit with a subject and predicate, and the Masoretic division of a verse, which is based on stylistic, pronunciation and cantation characteristics, and not (merely) on syntax.

the following verbal clauses **וְלֹא יִרְאֶה מוֹת** (“and [what man] will not see death”) in v. 49b, and **יִמְלֹט נַפְשׁוֹ מִיַּד שְׁאוֹל** (“[what man] can save himself from the hand of sheol”) in v. 49c<sup>17</sup>. All seven questions together form two groups: the first group (four questions in vv. 47a-48c) has the addressed deity as agent-subject, while the second group (three questions in vv. 49ac) has a human being as agent-subject. The elliptic constructions of these questions are quite regular and clear.

Less simple is the syntactic construction of v. 48a. The imperative **זָכֵר** (“remember”) is connected through a *maqṣēf* with **אֲנִי** (“I”). Thus the Masoretes indicated that the two words joined to form a single tone unit. But do they also form a syntactic unit? If it were to indicate “remember me”, the personal pronoun would have been expressed by a pronominal suffix, **זָכְרִי**. However, here this “I” is an independent form and seems to function as an interjection, “remember, I”<sup>18</sup>. In some of the ancient versions it is changed into **אֲדֹנִי** (“Lord”) <sup>19</sup>, followed by many modern commentators and translations<sup>20</sup>. This emendation acknowledges the fact that the word **אֲנִי** is set apart from the verb, thus functioning as the addressed person. It also takes into consideration that v. 51 has a similar structure with the verb **זָכֵר**. In both verses, v. 48a (**זָכֵר אֲנִי**) and v. 51 (**זָכֵר אֲדֹנִי**), the involved subjects **אֲנִי** and **אֲדֹנִי** are set apart from the regular clause’s predication. I consider, therefore, this emendation plausible and justifiable.

Dependent on this imperative clause “remember” in v. 48a are the next two clauses in v. 48b and v. 48c. Verse 48b starts with the interrogative **מָה** (“what”), which functions as an attribute of the noun **חַלָּה** (“lifespan”), thus constituting a nominal clause: “what is a lifespan?”. The same construction of an interrogative attributively linked to the noun **שׁוֹא** (“futility”)

<sup>17</sup> Whereas v. 49b opens with a *waw* and expresses a new action as a continuation of the action in the verbal clause in v. 49a, the verbal clause in v. 49c is an asyndetic verbal clause that further specifies the previous action expressed in v. 49b.

<sup>18</sup> H.U. STEYMANS, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund*, 181, proposes to respect the Masoretic version of v. 48: “Doch in der endgültigen Form des Verses bezieht das bittende «Ich» diese Bitte auf sich selbst: «Ich — was (ist) Lebenszeit (für mich)?»”. The problem with this proposal is that “for me” is neither presented nor implied in this verse. It merely asks: “Remember I, what is a life span?”, thus expressing a general question, not limited to a specific individual or collective. The same problem arises in BARBIERO, “Alcune osservazioni”, 539, who translates: “Ricorda: io ... che cos’è la (mia) vita?”, thus adding the possessive pronoun “my” in “my life”.

<sup>19</sup> Although not in LXX, in which **אֲנִי** in v. 48a is translated with  $\mu\omicron\upsilon$  ( $\mu\eta\theta\iota\sigma\theta\eta\tau\iota$  τίς μου ἢ ὑπόστασις).

<sup>20</sup> See BHS (prp **אֲדֹנִי**), and HOSSFELD – ZENGER, *Psalm 51–100*, 580: “Statt des **זָכֵר אֲנִי** des MT ist mit Rücksicht auf V 51 **זָכֵר אֲדֹנִי** «gedenke Herr» zu lesen. Die Konjekture erscheint von den vielen vorgeschlagenen noch als die schonendste im Umgang mit dem MT zu sein”.



returns in v. 48c. This time it is followed by the verb **ברא** in *qatal* second person singular with YHWH as the implied subject and **כל־בני־אדם** as the explicit direct object. This construction has given rise to emendations and questions <sup>21</sup>. The reason for emendations is mainly based on semantic arguments, because the combination of creation and futility is very irregular, to say the least. However, syntactically the similarities between v. 48b and v. 48c are clear, since they are set in parallel position: “[Remember, O Lord] **מה־חלד**”, and “[Remember, O Lord] **על־מה־שוא בראת**”. Because v. 48b introduces the main topic, “what is a lifespan?”, the psalmist can leave out this crucial term **חלד** (“lifespan”) in v. 48c. Hence, v. 48c is an elliptical construction. The clause entails the noun **חלד** (“lifespan”), presented explicitly in the nominal clause of 48b, to be included in the direct object of the action expressed by the verb **ברא** in v. 48c: it regards the lifespan of all human beings.

In short, immediately following upon the questions in v. 47: why YHWH is hiding his face and why he is so furious, the psalmist expands the scope of this anger to the limited lifespans of human beings.

How long — YHWH — will you hide your face forever?

— will your fury blaze like fire?

Remember — LORD — what is a lifespan?

— on what **שוא**/futility did you **ברא** [the lifespans of] all human beings?

A related topic is discussed in v. 49, namely death and mortality. Again the subject is “human beings” in general. The verb forms are set in *yiqtol* and express that no one will live forever and that everyone will surely die, since no one can escape from the hand of sheol. The limited time given to human beings in v. 48 and their mortality in v. 49 stand in sharp contrast to v. 47, where YHWH is said to act *forever*, that is, for an unlimited time.

#### IV. A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF PS 89,47-49

YHWH’s powerful actions, described in vv. 39-46 as rejection of his anointed one and repudiation of the covenant, are resumed in v. 47 under the heading of “hiding” and “fury”. The Niphal of **סתר** expresses the event in which YHWH carries out the action of concealing himself, so that

<sup>21</sup> Rather than **על־מה־שוא**, BHS proposes to read **עולם השוא** with an *atnah* under **עולם**; others, as indicated in *DCH* 8:271-272, follow this reading, but do not take into account the *atnah* and they translate: “the duration of eternity; have you created all human beings as futility?”. I follow the Masoretic verse alignment here.



he cannot be seen or found<sup>22</sup>. People experience this hiding as absence, loss of contact, and rejection. Consequently, they fear that their deity has abandoned them. The noun חמה (“anger, fury”) expresses an even more hostile attitude, especially because it is specified by the simile כמִרְאֵשׁ (“like fire”). Together with the verb בִּעַר (“blaze”), the simile builds into the metaphors YHWH’S FURY IS LIKE FIRE, YHWH’S FURIOUS ACTIONS ARE LIKE BLAZING FIRE, YHWH’S FURY CONSUMES EVERYTHING JUST AS FIRE CONSUMES EVERYTHING. As such the two images in v. 47a and 47b are quite conventional in the Hebrew Bible, but the combination of the two contrasting images is remarkable: while the former evokes YHWH’s absence, the latter portrays his violent and devastating presence.

Verse 48 takes another step down the road of angry protest. This time, lifespan itself is the topic of discussion. The term used is חֵלֶד, which occurs four times in the Hebrew Bible with the meaning of “lifespan”<sup>23</sup> or “duration of life”<sup>24</sup>. The first time, in Ps 17,14, the psalmist prays YHWH to save him from his enemies: “(rescue me) from men, O YHWH, with your hand, from men with a limited portion in lifetime”<sup>25</sup>. Here a distinction is made between a limited portion, חֵלֶק, and the total lifespan, חֵלֶד. The second attestation is Ps 39,6: “You have set my days just hand-breadths long; my lifespan (חֵלֶד) is as nothing (כְּאֵין) before you (נִגְדָךְ)”. Here the short total lifespan of the psalmist is set over against the enduring presence of the deity. In Job 11,17 Zophar incites Job to put all misery out of his mind, and live “life (חֵלֶד) as long as it is bright as mid-day”. In these three usages, the word חֵלֶד refers to the total time of life, which is nevertheless very short. Ps 89,48 fits in this pattern of a critical assessment of the brevity of human life because it considers it grounded on שוֹא.

The fifty-three attestations of the noun שוֹא in the Hebrew Bible express meanings such as “deceit, worthlessness, falsehood, vanity, futility, emptiness, delusion, illusion, ineffectiveness, pointlessness, idleness”. Used as an adverb it denotes “in vain, futile, purposeless, without reason or cause, ineffective”. The dictionaries and lexicons describe the meaning of שוֹא

<sup>22</sup> On the function of the Niphal, see E. VAN WOLDE, “The Niphal as Middle Voice and its Consequence for Meaning”, *JSOT* 43 (2019) 453-478.

<sup>23</sup> Dictionaries, lexicons, and commentaries all agree on this lexeme’s meaning; see BDB, *HALOT* and *DCH*, as well as the commentaries mentioned in note 6.

<sup>24</sup> In combination with words of living or prepositions of place it means “world”: see, e.g., Isa 38,11 (“world”); Ps 49,2 (“all inhabitants of the world”). The lexicons and dictionaries record these occurrences as well as earlier proposed emendations. In the present study we do not discuss the emendations.

<sup>25</sup> The noun חֵלֶק designates “a share,” while the verb חָלַק means “to divide”, “to have one’s share”, “to apportion”, “to distribute”, or “to get a share in”.

extensively and demonstrate that the term in all its contexts of use has very negative connotations <sup>26</sup>, but no one has raised the question whether **שוא** is ever used to qualify an action performed by YHWH, as here in Ps 89,48. Is YHWH ever said to be the agent-subject of an action that is qualified as “set on futile ground”, that is, purposeless, ineffective, or arbitrary? Is his action ever judged as in vain or without a cause? In fact, in a majority of cases the notion of **שוא** is positioned in direct opposition to the deity. It is used in relation to false speech, to those who break the covenant, to false magicians, to false prophets, to false idols. The only texts in which YHWH’s actions are associated with **שוא** are found in Jer 2,29-30 and 6,29. In the former, YHWH is reported saying: **לשוא הכיתי את-בניכם** (“in vain I have beaten your sons; they would not accept correction”). And in Jer 6,29 the term is used metaphorically: **לשוא צרך צרוך** (“in vain did the smelter smelt — the dross is not separated out”). In both texts, **שוא** is used in the prepositional construction **לשוא** to designate “in vain”, and it functions in the context of punishment and rejection. However, here in Ps 89,48 it is used as an independent noun **שוא** construed with an interrogative “on what vanity/futile ground,” and it is used with YHWH as agent-subject of the verb **ברא**. In conclusion, the usage of **שוא** in Ps 89,48 stands out as unique.

The verb linked to this noun is **ברא**. Surprisingly, in modern scholarship on Psalm 89, no one has raised questions with regard to the conceptual content of v. 48 <sup>27</sup>. If it means: “you, God, on what futile ground did you create all human beings?” <sup>28</sup>, then it raises doubts about the creation of the whole human race. But does it? Is the text dealing with the creation of all human beings? To answer this question, further attention should be paid to the meaning of the verb **ברא**.

For more than a century now, numerous biblical scholars have been doubtful about the standard view that **ברא** denotes “to create”, suggesting, instead, that the verb’s meaning comes closer to that of cutting or

<sup>26</sup> See HALOT, vol. 4, 1424-1427; DCH, vol. 8, 271-272.

<sup>27</sup> See HOSSFELD – ZENGER, *Psalm 51-100*, 596, who merely state that this verse is inserted and an elaboration of the lament on the transience of life. See also H.U. STEYMAN, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund*, 181, who does not spend a word on the semantic content of v. 48. The exception is BARBIERO, “Alcune osservazioni”, 538-539, who does discuss the meaning of v. 48b. Based on the conventional understanding of **ברא** as “create”, he explains the odd combination of “creation” with **שוא**. Without further explanation he translates **שוא** with “ephemera”: “vale la pena creare per poi lasciare vivere in una maniera così effimera?” (538). Yet, it is unlikely that “transience” is the meaning of **שוא**, because in all its biblical attestations this term expresses the more fundamental notions of unfoundedness, vanity, purposelessness, and not just brevity (“short living”).

<sup>28</sup> NJPS: “why should You have created every man in vain?”

separation<sup>29</sup>. However, they failed to convince the majority, mainly because God's creation of the heaven and the earth in Gen 1,1 is a *theologoumenon* in both Jewish and Christian traditions. In the last decade, a new discussion arose about the meaning of the verb ברא<sup>30</sup>. The present study focuses attention on the use of this verb in Psalm 89 and takes the opportunity to consider which of the two options is most likely.

First, the standard view is considered. If ברא denotes "to create", then v. 48 should be translated: "on what futility/vanity did you create [the lifespans of] all human beings?". In this view, the very creation of human beings is being criticized. YHWH is attacked because of the emptiness or arbitrariness of his choice to create humanity. This concept is, however, completely absent in the mind of ancient Israel, as least as far as we can determine from texts in the Hebrew Bible. Even in wisdom literature (Job, Qohelet), the notion of the vanity or the ungroundedness or arbitrariness of creation is completely absent. Of course, Qohelet criticizes the absurdity of human life, but that is an altogether different topic. In Job, despite all its criticism, God's creation is portrayed as valuable, although following its own rules (Job 38–41). Also in Ps 89,10–15, reference is made to

<sup>29</sup> In chronological order: W. GESENIUS, *Hebräisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch über die Schriften des Alten Testaments mit einschluß der geographischen Namen und chaldäischen Wörter im Esra und Daniel, Theil 1* (Leipzig 1810) 120; W. GESENIUS, *Thesaurus philologicus criticus linguae hebraeae et chaldaee Veteris Testamenti* (Lipsiae 1829) 236; S.R. DRIVER, *The Book of Genesis, with Introduction and Notes* (London 1904) 3; H.A. BRONGERS, *De scheppingstradities bij de profeten* (Amsterdam 1945) 13–16; J. VAN DER PLOEG, "Le sens du verbe hébreu ברא bārā". Étude sémasiologique", *Le Muséon* 59 (1946) 143–157; P. HUMBERT, "Emploi et portée du verbe bārā (créer) dans l'Ancien Testament", *Opusculs d'un hébraisant* (ed. P. HUMBERT) (Mémoires de l'Université de Neuchâtel 26; Neuchâtel 1958) 146–165; É. DANTINNE, "Création et séparation", *Le Muséon* 74 (1961) 441–451; K.-H. BERNHARDT, "ברא", in G.J. BOTTERWECK – H. RINGGREN – H.-J. FABRY (eds.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 10 vols. (Stuttgart 1970–1998) 1:773–777, here 773; P. BEAUCHAMP, *Création et séparation* (Paris 1969); C. WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1. Teilband 1: Genesis 1–11* (BKAT 1/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1974) 99; R.C. VAN LEEUWEN, "ברא", in W.A. VAN GEMEREN (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols. (Carlisle 1997) 1:728–735, here 731.

<sup>30</sup> Instigated by E. VAN WOLDE, "Why the Verb ברא Does Not Mean 'to Create' in Genesis 1.1–2.4a", *JSOT* 34 (2009) 3–23, which received a response in B. BECKING – M.C.A. KORPEL, "To Create, to Separate or to Construct: An Alternative for a Recent Proposal as to the Interpretation of ברא in Gen 1:1–2:4a", *JHS* 10 (2010) 2–21, which again evoked a rejoinder in E.J. VAN WOLDE – R. REZETKO, "Semantics and the Semantics of ברא: A Rejoinder to the Arguments Advanced by B. Becking and M. Korpel", *JHS* 11.9 (2011) 2–39. At the same time (or slightly later) J.H. WALTON, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN 2011), advanced similar ideas. T.R. WARDLAW, "The Meaning of ברא in Genesis 1:1–2:3", *VT* 64 (2014) 502–513, opposed VAN WOLDE's view. Later E. VAN WOLDE offered an more extensive defense of ברא in "Separation and Creation in Genesis 1 and Psalm 104, A Continuation of the Discussion of the Verb ברא", *VT* 67 (2017) 611–647.

creation: YHWH's mighty hand and powerful arm are praised; his ownership of earth and heaven. But to call his creation based on שוא ("vanity" or "futile") seems out of the question. Even more important is the fact that in the immediate context of v. 48 nothing points in this direction. Instead, vv. 48b, v. 48c, and v. 49 discuss the shortness of life and mortality.

This brings us to the other option: ברא designating "to separate", a term that figures in the semantic domain of spatiality. Etymologically it is indisputable that in a great number of Hebrew verbs, such as בור, באר, בדר, בפר, פרר, פרק, פרץ, שבר, חבר, and פרש, the biconsonantal items בר and פר express the notion of cutting or separating. Related terms in cognate languages show the same<sup>31</sup>. Also the distribution of creation verbs in the Hebrew Bible shows that the verb עשה, not ברא, is prototypically used to designate God's creation of the heaven and the earth<sup>32</sup>. Furthermore, various usages of the Qal of ברא are impossible to understand in its standard meaning "to create", such as in Num 16,30-33<sup>33</sup>, Isa 4,5<sup>34</sup>, and Isa 57,19<sup>35</sup>, whereas the explanation "to separate" fits

<sup>31</sup> Consider the following Akkadian words with the biconsonantal item *br* that express the notion of separation: *bari* "between, among", *barītu(m)* "intervening space, interval", *bāru* "open country", *bēru* "distant, remote", *b.ru(m)* "to choose, select", *biri* "between", *birā* "between, among", *birītu(m)* "interval, separation, cutting", *birtu* "between", *bīru* "interval", and *parāsu(m)* "cut, separate, decide". See also Punic *br* "graveur" and Syriac *barr* "to separate, liberate".

<sup>32</sup> The prototypical terms to indicate the making of the *earth* are the verb עשה to describe that God made or created the earth and the verbs יסד and כן to designate God's grounding of the earth. The prototypical terms to designate God's creation of the *heavens* are "to make" (עשה) and "to spread out" (נטה). Furthermore, in Exodus 20 the sabbath is twice defined in relation to God's creation of the heaven and the earth, in which God's creation is resumed by עשה and not ברא. And in Gen 14,19.22 God is twice mentioned as "the creator of heaven and earth", using the term קונה. Finally, in the book of Psalms the fixed expression of God as "creator of the heaven and the earth" never contains the participle בורא, but always the participle עושה (5×).

<sup>33</sup> See P. HUMBERT, "Emploi et portée du verbe *bārā* (créer) dans l'Ancien Testament", 147; H.E. HANSON, "Num XVI 30 and the meaning of *bārā*", VT 22 (1972) 353-359; and J. MILGROM, *Numbers*. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia, PA 1990) 137. They explain why the word combination ברא בריאה in Num 16,30 denotes: "[if YHWH] splits open a chasm".

<sup>34</sup> Various questions arise with regard to the standard translation of Isa 45,6-7: "I am the former (יוצר) of light and the creator (בורא) of darkness. I am the maker (עושה) of good and the creator (בורא) of evil". Did God create darkness? If a reference to Genesis 1 is presupposed in Isa 45,6-7, this would be impossible, since in Gen 1,2-3 darkness is pre-existent. And did God create evil, at least according to Isa 45,7? However, if the verb ברא designates "to separate", then there would be no problem at all. The text then would state: "God formed the light and separated it from darkness" (as indeed, is stated in Gen 1,2-3), "that he made good and separated it from evil".

<sup>35</sup> All Bible translations struggle with Isa 57,19: "to the mourners, creating flowing fruit of lips". However, if the verb ברא designates "to separate", the line describes how heartening or comforting words flow out of or separate from the lips: "to the mourners separating flowing fruit/heartening words from the lips".

these texts perfectly well <sup>36</sup>. In Ps 89,13, the Qal of ברא is used to describe God setting the North apart from the South <sup>37</sup>. Other arguments in favour of ברא meaning “to separate” are based on the Piel occurrences of ברא, which clearly designate “clearing a space (from trees, adulteresses)” <sup>38</sup>, and the Hiphil of ברא meaning “carved off portions of meat” <sup>39</sup>. Finally, the ten appearances of the Niphal of ברא are spatial terms which mean “to go apart” <sup>40</sup>.

These arguments make the option of interpreting ברא as “to separate” very plausible. If so, Ps 89,48c should be translated: “on what vanity/futile ground did you separate/set apart [the lifespans of] all human beings?”. In other words, why, for what futile reason, did you apportion or distribute shorter or longer lifespans to human beings? In effect, both questions in v. 48b and v. 48c regard general human conditions. This understanding of ברא fits within the surrounding context that states that every human being will surely die and cannot escape from the hand of sheol <sup>41</sup>. Verse 48 questions the arbitrary grounds on which YHWH decides to distribute lifespans over humanity, and it thus launches a powerful assault on YHWH. It

<sup>36</sup> For an analysis of Isa 4,5; 40,21-26; 45,6-7 and a discussion of the Septuagint, Samaritan, and Targumic texts, see E. VAN WOLDE, “Separation and Creation”.

<sup>37</sup> Wind directions cannot be “made” or “constructed”; they are separated from one another.

<sup>38</sup> The Piel of ברא in Josh 17,15.18 expresses not “to cut down trees” but “to make an empty space by cutting down trees”. Ezek 21,24 contains the verb ברא twice to designate “to cut out a spot”. Ezek 23,47 evokes “to clear the place” of adulteresses.

<sup>39</sup> 1 Sam 2,29.

<sup>40</sup> The verb ברא Niphal occurs 4x in the infinitive: “This is the history of the heaven and the earth in their going apart/when they went apart” (Gen 2,4); “He called their name ‘humankind’ on the day of their going apart/when they went apart” (Gen 5,2); “on the day of your going apart” (Ezek 28,13, addressed to the king of Tyre, who is first described as staying among the gods in the garden of Eden); and “from the day of your going apart” (Ezek 28,15). It is used once as a Niphal participle in Ps 102,19, where it refers to the resultative state with a spatial notion, namely “the set-apart people will praise YHWH”. Five times a finite form of ברא Niphal occurs: in Exod 34,10, YHWH’s working of wonders is strongly associated with Moses’ people and disassociated from all other people: “(the wonders) that will not spread out (ברא Niphal) over all the earth and all peoples”; in Isa 48,6-7: “(As of now, I announce to you new things, well-guarded secrets you did not know). Only now they are spread out (ברא Niphal), and not of old; before today you had not heard them”; in Ezek 21,35: “Return it to its sheath — in the place where you (= the sword) were unsheathed (ברא Niphal), in the land of your origin (= the sword’s origin), I will judge you”; in Ps 104,29-30: “you hide your face, they are terrified; you collect their breath, they perish and return to their dust; you send off your breath, they fall apart (ברא Niphal); and then you will/can renew the face of the earth”; and in Ps 148,5: “the waters above the heavens will praise the name of YHWH, because he commanded and they went apart (ברא Niphal)”.

<sup>41</sup> Whereas v. 49 regards the fact that every man will die, v. 48 discusses the fact that the lifespan of each and every one is different and apparently arbitrarily determined. Righteous people may die at a very young age, and bad people may enjoy a long life. In other words, v. 49 regards mortality in general and v. 48 the length of life: all humans are the same because they all die, and they are all different because their lifespans are very different indeed.

is not just David or Israel the psalmist is angry about, but the way in which YHWH treats humanity. This also explains the otherwise incomprehensible indication “all” in “all human beings”. YHWH’s unfounded disparity has an effect on all human beings <sup>42</sup>.

Verse 49 proceeds along the same path. The three questions open with the interrogative “what man?” and consider the position of man (גבר) in general. The terms life and death are not further specified until the last clause in 49c, where death is described as “the hand of sheol” <sup>43</sup>. The action itself is expressed by the verb מלט, “escape, save (one’s life)”. In contrast to previous statements in Psalm 89 in which YHWH’s hand was seen as the instrument of deliverance and judgment, this seems now to be no longer true. Instead the hand of sheol turns out to be more powerful. These questions in v. 49 testify of the general human condition: no one can escape from the grasp of death.

The semantic analysis of vv. 47-48 explains the importance of the elliptic clausal constructions in vv. 48-49, in which v. 48b has the crucial noun חלד (“lifespan”) placed in a prominent position. The immediately following clause in v. 48c relies implicitly on the same noun. The ellipses in v. 49 are also important, especially the absence of the subject [what man] in v. 49bc. Together the syntactic and semantic analyses lead to the following translation in which the ellipses are set between brackets.

Ps 89,47-49		
עד־מה יהוה תסתיר לנצח	47a	How long, YHWH, will you hide forever?
תבער כמראש חמתך:	47b	[How long] will your fury blaze like fire?
וזכר־אני	48a	Remember, O Lord,
מה־חלד	48b	What is a lifespan?
על־מה־שוא בראת כל־בני־אדם:	48c	[Remember, YHWH.] On what futile ground did you set apart/distribute [the lifespans of] all human beings?
מי גבר יחיה	49a	What man will live,
ולא יראה־מות	49b	And [what man] will not see death,
ימלט נפשו מיד־שואל:	49c	[what man] can save himself from the hand of sheol?

<sup>42</sup> FLOYD, “Psalm 89”, 446-447, describes vv. 47-52 as a “reproach petitioning Yahweh for deliverance” (446), and explains it as follows: “The questions and petitions urging Yahweh to do something about the overthrow of the monarchy are predicated, not only upon the promise of an eternal covenant with David (vv. 50-52), but also upon the nature of the created order itself (vv. 47-49)” (447). Remarkably, Floyd does not mention the notion of שוא (“futility,” “vanity,” or “deceit”) at all: is the nature of the created order based on vanity? Yet, as far as I know, no commentator or scholar has discussed this notion of שוא in the context of Ps 89,47-52.

<sup>43</sup> Although MITCHELL, “Genre disputes”, 518-519, notices the important “hand” references in Psalm 89, he does not reflect on its consequence: what does it mean when at the end of the psalm, in vv. 43 and 49, only the hand of sheol is mentioned, and not the hand of YHWH?

## V. A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF Ps 89,50-52

The previous section is set apart by a *selah* before the final section in vv. 50-52. Although a unity on its own, it is linked to the previous section by the interrogative **איה** (“where?”), which continues the series of interrogatives in vv. 47-49, and by the repetition of the imperative “remember” in vv. 48 and 51. While the questions in vv. 47-49 relate to every man, the question and admonition in vv. 50-52 relate to David alone. Verses 50-52 return to the themes developed in the first part of the psalm, as is visible in the repetitive use of the terms **חסד** and **אמונה** (vv. 2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, and 50), the name of David (vv. 4, 21, 36 and 50), the reference to my or your “anointed one” (vv. 20, 21, 39 and 52), and the verb **שבע** (“swear”, vv. 4, 36, and 50). Therefore, this final section returns to and unfolds the lines developed before, but points them in another direction.

Attention to the syntax of this section will be worthwhile. The question expressed in v. 50 consists of two clauses, a nominal clause with an interrogative and a relative verbal clause (**אשר** is implied) with a Niphal of **שבע**: “Where are your former actions of steadfast love, O Lord, [which] you swore to David in your faithfulness?”. Verse 51a opens with an imperative **זכר** (just like v. 48) followed by the vocative **אדני** (also comparable to the independently set **אני** in v. 48) and the direct object, “the abuse of your servants”.

The next clause in v. 51b is remarkable in many respects: it is set in first person singular. Who is speaking here? David, the psalmist, or YHWH? If it is YHWH, then he was the one who drew his people out from all others and held them to his bosom. In that case, v. 51b is an elliptic construction, implying “you (=YHWH) said”. If it is the psalmist who speaks, then the question arises whether he could have said that he held anyone in his bosom. Finally, if David is the speaker, the psalmist must be quoting him. This is possible, since David is introduced by name again in v. 50b. Also the last line of this implicitly quoted speech refers to David as the anointed one, because v. 52b marks “the footsteps/tracks of your anointed one” as the mistreated party. Although no absolute certainty can be acquired, the last option seems to be the most plausible, so that v. 51b refers to David’s care for his people. These verses could then be translated as follows: “(v. 51a) Remember, O Lord, the abuse of your servants, (v. 51b) that I hold in my bosom [from] all the many peoples, (v. 52a) how your enemies abused, O YHWH, (v. 52b) abused the steps of your anointed one”.



## VI. A SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF Ps 89,50-52

In v. 50a the psalmist characterises YHWH's behaviour as **חסדיך הראשונים**, that is, as something he used to do in the past, but is not doing anymore. This "something" is expressed by the noun **חסד**, a word that has been the subject of intensive semantic study<sup>44</sup>. Gordon Clark made a corpus-linguistic study of **חסד** and of related terms in the same semantic field, and concluded that **חסד** "is not merely an attitude or an emotion; it is an emotion that leads to an activity beneficial to the recipient"<sup>45</sup>. It may be described as a beneficial action performed, or better still, as an enduring mutual commitment that YHWH expresses in beneficial actions. The word **חסד** can therefore best be translated as "(acts of) steadfast love", and this love includes notions of care, support, and shelter. Clark also found that **אמת** and **אמונה** are essential components of **חסד**<sup>46</sup>.

The word **אמונה**, also used here in v. 50, designates trustworthiness or faithfulness made manifest in action. It is faithfulness that shows itself in action: you can have confidence in this deity, because he will offer support and help you out in distressing situations. The steadfastness of this commitment is further marked in v. 50b by the verb **שבַּע** (Niphal): "you swore" it to David.

However, by applying the term **הראשונים** and by posing the question, "where are your acts of steadfast love of old?", the speaker calls the entire complex of confidence and trust into question. He wonders what

<sup>44</sup> In twentieth century lexicographical studies of **חסד**, the study made by N. GLUECK, *Das Wort חסד im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauche als menschliche und göttliche gemeinschaftsgemäße Verhaltungsweise* (BZAW 47; Gießen 1927), was very influential. According to Glueck, the secular meaning of the word **חסד** designates conduct between humans, based on a mutual relationship of rights and duties, and this meaning has much in common with the concept of *berît* ("covenant"). The theological meaning describes God's actions towards humans driven by an obligation towards the community according to the covenant. These two characteristics, the connection between **חסד** and covenant and the reciprocity that lies at the base of **חסד** and *berît*, have had an impact on dictionaries (*HALOT* and *DCH*) and many other studies. In 1978 K.D. SAKENFELD, *The Meaning of חסד in the Hebrew Bible. A New Inquiry* (Missoula, MT 1978), presented a new study on **חסד**. She does not regard **חסד** as a reciprocal action but rather as something that is based on a personal relationship or a previous act on the part of the recipient of **חסד**. The latest extensive study is G.R. CLARK, *The Word חסד in the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTS 157; Sheffield 1993), who builds on the previous studies but expands it with a corpus linguistic study of a number of lexemes related to **חסד**. I follow Clark's study here.

<sup>45</sup> CLARK, *The Word חסד*, 267, and he continues: "The relative status of the participants is never a feature of the act, which may be described as a beneficent action performed, in the context of a deep and enduring commitment between two persons or parties, by one who is able to render assistance to the needy party who in the circumstances is unable to help him- or herself".

<sup>46</sup> CLARK, *The Word חסד*, 259-260.



has happened with YHWH's steadfast love. It seems that it was something from the past. Was his trust in the deity ill-founded? Can he no longer rely on his God? Now we notice the sharp contrast between the everlasting endurance affirmed again and again in the first part of the psalm <sup>47</sup> and the limited time scale suggested by this verse. All good things seem to belong to the past and not to the present. In this sense, this section is more closely related to the previous section that speaks of short lives followed by death at the hands of sheol.

The next two verses, vv. 51-52, contain the verb **חרף** twice and the noun **חרפה** once. The dictionaries and lexicons explain the verb as "to reproach, revile, taunt, mock". In his comprehensive study of **חרף** and **חרפה** James Aitken demonstrates that in addition to this meaning one should recognize that these terms do not denote plain speaking but are performative speech acts <sup>48</sup>. That is to say, they designate acts of verbal denigration, "mocking with disdain", and are a distinctive way of acting. "It is striking how in the majority of occurrences the subject of the verb **חרף** II is an opponent of the speaker, God or Israel, indicating that it is a negative action performed by enemies" <sup>49</sup>. It seems to be more than just using abusive words and involves the assertion of superiority and defiance. The noun **חרפה** denotes both a reproach and the object of a reproach, as well as shame or the object of shame. In many instances the noun denotes an abstract condition of "disgrace", such as that arising from a situation that contravenes social convention <sup>50</sup>.

Earlier on, in v. 46, the very same idea of shame or disgrace brought upon YHWH's anointed one was mentioned, when the speaker accuses YHWH of covering him with "shame" (**בושה**). In a fascinating study, Yael Avrahami discusses the verb **בוש** and synonymous roots found alongside **בוש** in the book of Psalms that belong to the larger semantic field of "worthlessness" <sup>51</sup>. She concludes that the verb **בוש** does not mean "to

<sup>47</sup> In vv. 2 and 3 YHWH's **חסד** is established forever; in v. 4 an enduring covenant is made with David; in vv. 5, 30, and 37 David's line is established forever; in vv. 5, 30, 37 David's throne is confirmed for all generations; in v. 37 David's throne is as enduring as the moon, established forever.

<sup>48</sup> J.K. AITKEN, *The Semantics of Blessing and Cursing in Ancient Hebrew* (Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Supplement 23; Leuven 2007) esp. 162-186.

<sup>49</sup> AITKEN, *The Semantics of Blessing and Cursing*, 174.

<sup>50</sup> AITKEN, *The Semantics of Blessing and Cursing*, 185.

<sup>51</sup> Y. AVRAHAMI, "בוש in the Psalms — Shame or Disappointment?", *JSOT* 34 (2010) 295-313. The common translation of the root **בוש** to mean "to shame/to be shamed" is found in dictionaries and most Bible translations. But Avrahami also mentions that "the equation 'בוש = shame' has been challenged in the past, yet dictionaries and translations have not fully adopted these suggestions" (303). She refers to W. GESENIUS, *Hebräisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch über die Schrift des Alten Testaments*, 5 vols. (Leipzig 1810-1812) I:91,

shame” but rather “to be disappointed” or “to fail”. She also objects to the widespread idea that shame should be understood within the honour-shame framework. She argues that the central opposition is trust/confidence vs disappointment/frustration/disgrace. Disappointment and disgrace are not simple emotions, but are experiences that follow on social rejection and may go to the point of despair. Avrahami concludes: “it is worthwhile to define בוש as an experience that emerges from a break between expectations and reality”<sup>52</sup>. In this context, the verb בוש describes the undesired state of the believer, which is the fate he wishes upon his enemies.

The verb חרף and the noun חרפה occurring in vv. 51a, 52a and 52b figure in the same semantic field and are often paired or clustered with בוש in the book of Psalms, including Psalm 89. Indeed, חרף and חרפה do include notions of social rejection, and point at an experience that emerges from a break between a positive expectation and the reality of failure. More specifically, these lexemes denote the verbal abuse that leads to a loss of confidence and trust, and they figure in the same framework of confidence vs frustration/disappointment. They express an intense sort of disappointment that leads to a feeling of failure and worthlessness, which is caused by the behaviour of other people, especially enemies. This experience of failure is mentioned three times in vv. 51-52 and is contrasted with the promise of divine aid and shelter that is recalled in v. 51b.

A very positive image of protection is expressed in v. 51b by the phrase, “I hold in my bosom”. In it, the noun חיק (“bosom”) with a first person singular pronominal suffix and the verb נשא (“bear, hold”) refers to David carrying his people in his bosom. The same combination of noun and verb occurs three times in the Hebrew Bible. In Num 11,12 Moses protests against YHWH, saying, “Did I conceive all this people, did I bear it, that you should say to me, ‘Carry/hold it in your bosom as a nurse carries an infant’?”<sup>53</sup>. The direct object “it” is expressed by a pronominal suffix (singular) attached to נשא. The word combination of “carrying” (נשא) and “bosom” (חיק) with a pronominal suffix designates care and support,

and to H. GUNKEL, *Introduction to Psalms*. The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel (trans. D. NOGALSKY) (Macon, GA 1998) 190, with regard to the root בוש. Avrahami remarks with regard to Gunkel: “Interestingly, however, Gunkel consistently uses the word *Scham* to translate the root in *Psalmen: übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen 1968)”, (303, n. 37).

<sup>52</sup> AVRAHAMI, “בוש in the Psalms”, 304, who refers to GESENIUS’ understanding of בוש in terms of failure in hope and expectation.

<sup>53</sup> The similarity between Num 11,12 and Ps 89,51 should be noted: while in Ps 89,51b David is the person who is “carrying his people in his bosom”, in Num 11,12 Moses is the one “carrying” his people in his bosom.

while the reference to the nurse and child conveys the dependence of the weaker person. In Isa 40,11 the metaphor of God as shepherd is used, in which the shepherd “gathers the lambs in his arms and carries [them] in his bosom”. In this verse, the direct object of the carrying or holding is not mentioned and also not needed grammatically. The meaning is clear: the verse expresses the great care the shepherd takes for his flock. The very same syntactic construction is visible in Ps 89,51. Here, too, the direct object of the action is implicit: David holds in his bosom [one people out of] many peoples. This is confirmed by the fact that the term חֵיק (“bosom”) points at intimacy, support, and care, always in a one-to-one relationship. In v. 51 David reminds YHWH of the abuse flung on his servants as well as of his (David’s) great care for his people (YHWH’s servants).

The results of the syntactic and semantic analyses lead to the following translation in which the ellipses are marked by brackets.

Ps 89, 50-52		
איה חסדיך הראשנים אדני	50a	Where are your deeds of steadfast love of old, O Lord,
נשבעת לדוד באמונתך:	50b	[which] you swore to David in your faithfulness?
זכר אדני חרפת עבדיך	51a	Remember, O Lord, the abuse of your servants
שאתי בחיקי כל־רבים עמים:	51b	that I hold in my bosom [one people out of] many peoples,
אשר חרפו אויביך יהוה	52a	how your enemies abused, O YHWH,
אשר חרפו עקבות משיחך:	52b	abused the steps of your anointed one.

## VII. A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PS 89,49-52

Psalm 89 is not only a textual composition, but it is also embedded in a rhetorical context. In the rhetorical situation of Psalm 89,47-52 the psalmist attempts to persuade YHWH to respond in a time of extreme crisis. The thrice repeated vocative YHWH and the once (or twice, if the masoretic text’s אֲנִי is amended to אֲדֹנִי) addressed אֲדֹנִי (“my Lord”) expresses clearly that YHWH is the person addressed in the final sections. In the preceding sections, the Israelite assembly is addressed as well. The question then is: what does the psalmist wish to achieve in Psalm 89 in general, and in the last two sections in particular? In order to answer this question, we have to turn to rhetorical studies, more specifically to the notion of “eloquent reticence”.

In three recent studies, Jan Joosten introduces the notion of “eloquent reticence” and defines it as the absence of an expressed request <sup>54</sup>. The

<sup>54</sup> J. JOOSTEN, “La non-mention de la fille en Lévitique 18. Exercice sur la rhétorique du Code de Sainteté”, *Études théologiques et religieuses* 75 (2000) 415-420; IDEM, “Biblical

omission of a central point seems to be a frequent feature in biblical speeches, which Joosten demonstrates in his analyses of Genesis 44, Leviticus 18, and 2 Sam 2,5-7. In the last text, David uses indirectness as a rhetorical strategy, overtly congratulating the people of Yabesh while covertly conveying to them his wish to extend his rule. He could have said: “and I would be happy to rule over you as well”, but this would have spoiled the effect. In biblical rhetoric, eloquent reticence is used as a deliberate technique and is employed in various ways depending on the circumstances and the strategy of the speaker: some things cannot be said, others are better left unsaid, and some do not need to be said in order to be heard. By leaving the central request unspoken, those who are addressed are invited to produce the thought that will persuade them of the central issue <sup>55</sup>.

The syntactic analyses have clarified the various ellipses in the final sections of Psalm 89. The omission of the noun חַלֵּל (“lifespan”) in v. 48 was syntactically acceptable because of the word’s inclusion in the immediately preceding clause, where it was placed in a prominent position. It appears to be a deliberate rhetorical technique not to accuse YHWH directly of arbitrariness in who will live a long life and who will die young. Nevertheless, expressing this action with the verb בָּרָא in combination with שׁוֹא (“vanity”, “ungrounded”) is clearly a negative judgment. All these verses deal with trust and mistrust. Is YHWH’s support of David’s throne equally based on שׁוֹא, on futility? Can it also evaporate, as is the fate of all human beings, whose lifespans are arbitrary? Is the care that YHWH showed in the past for David and his servants also transient, based on vanity? This implicit or indirect accusation of fickleness demands an answer from YHWH. If he does not respond, he proves himself to be unreliable. It is up to YHWH to demonstrate that his actions and attitude towards Israel are not based on whims.

Two arguments support this rhetorical strategy of eloquent reticence in Psalm 89’s final sections. First, the twice repeated imperative to remember (vv. 48a and 51a), in close relation to the respective topics of lifespan and abuse: “remember, O Lord, what a lifespan is” and “remember, O Lord, what the abuse [inflicted on] your servants is”. Second, the repetition of כָּל־בְּנֵי־אָדָם and כָּל־רִבִּים עַמִּים in vv. 48b and 51b fashions a link between the differentiation in lifespans of all human beings and the differentiation in favour of the anointed one and one people from

Rhetoric as Illustrated by Judah’s Speech in Genesis 44:18-34”, *JSOT* 41 (2016) 15-30; IDEM, “Biblical Rhetoric and the Western Tradition”, Paper delivered at Oxford, available at [oxford.academia.edu](http://oxford.academia.edu).

<sup>55</sup> JOOSTEN, “Biblical rhetoric and the Western Tradition”, 6.

among all the rest. Both actions by YHWH are based on ungrounded partiality, whether it is the lucky fate of a long life or the favoured role of the anointed one. But now, the anointed king who was promised enduring protection and steadfast love has been conquered. The author silently questions whether YHWH's covenant promises were also based on futility and, indirectly, through a cascade of questions, requests YHWH to settle the case: "YHWH, show that your acts of steadfast love do not belong to the past, that it does not go the way all human beings go, namely to the grave. Please demonstrate to us that the election of David out of all peoples is not over". In short, the silent request is: "Make his and our election come true again".

### VIII. CONCLUSION

The main conclusion of this study is that the final two sections in vv. 47-49 and 50-52 represent in a nutshell the fundamental crises addressed in the entire psalm. Set in the framework of confidence and disappointment, Psalm 89 sketches the opposition between YHWH's enduring and passing love for Israel, his election of an anointed king and his rejection of him, his commitment to David in a solemn covenant and his repudiation of that covenant. These conflicting realities return in the last two sections, yet the timescale has changed. The enduring love seems to belong to the past and appears to be something that YHWH has to be reminded of. The limited lifespan of human beings is set in the foreground, with death always nearby. Frustrated, disappointed and afraid, the author accuses YHWH of being fickle. Verse 48 refers to it in two questions: *מה-חלד* ("what is a lifespan?") and *על-מה-שוא בראת כל-בני-אדם* ("on what futile ground did you set apart [the lifespans of] all human beings?"). Is the steadfast love that YHWH swore in the past for David and his servants also transient, based on vanity? Upon this implicit or indirect accusation of arbitrariness YHWH has to react.

In Psalm 89 the psalmist praises and reproaches YHWH, and makes a silent request as well. He asks YHWH to demonstrate that his steadfast love is not based on futility or arbitrariness. By confronting YHWH with his inconsistencies, the psalmist hopes in these two final sections to reverse the reversal of fate of which the entire psalm testifies. Distinguishable is the deliberate rhetorical strategy of eloquent reticence. In it the accusation of vanity and the consequent request to YHWH are left unspoken: will he please show that his preference for Israel was not based on futility and fickleness; will he please alleviate the experience of failure that oppresses

the psalmist and his audience. Now it is upon YHWH to demonstrate that his actions and attitude towards Israel are not based on unfounded disparity.

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#### SUMMARY

In Ps 89,47-52 the psalmist raises his voice in angry protest against YHWH. He accuses him of abandoning his anointed one. Even worse, YHWH's action of **ברא** with regard to all human beings seems to be "futile" or "based on random grounds" (**שוא**). This combination of terms is quite unique. By introducing the notion of "arbitrariness", the psalmist comments on YHWH's seemingly random selection of a shorter life or a longer life for someone, and thus raises doubts in the mind of his audience. Is the steadfast love that YHWH showed in the past for David and his servants also transient and based on vanity? Upon this explicit and implicit accusation of fickleness YHWH has to react.

## THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS/POUNDS: APOCALYPTIC WARNING OR ECONOMIC CRITIQUE?

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Parable of the Talents (Matt 25,14-30)/Pounds (Luke 19,12-26), in spite of minor differences — talents vs. pounds, three vs. ten slaves, a hard-fisted (σκληρός) master (Matt 25,24) vs. a strict (αὐστηρός) master (Luke 19,21), the rewards to the “good” slaves — and variations in word choices, tells the same story: a master gives something to his servants/slaves while he goes away and, when he returns, rewards those who had produced something out of what he had given. Klyne Snodgrass sums up the story as “a master rewards or punishes his servants for their productivity during his absence”<sup>1</sup>. One finds such a story pattern in two later rabbinic parables. In answering someone who asserted that Scripture was given at Mt. Sinai but not Mishnah, the rabbi responds:

My son, were not both Scripture and Mishnah given by the Almighty? Does the fact that they are different from each other mean that both cannot have been given by Him? By what parable may the question be answered? By the one of a mortal king who had two servants whom he loved with utter love. To one he gave a measure of wheat and to the other he gave a measure of wheat, to one a bundle of flax and to the other a bundle of flax. What did the clever one of the two do? He took the flax and wove it into a tablecloth. He took the wheat and made it into fine flour by sifting the grain first and grinding it. Then he kneaded the dough and baked it, set the loaf upon the table, spread the tablecloth over it, and kept it to await the coming of the king. But the foolish one of the two did not do anything at all. After a while, the king came into his house and said to the two servants, “My sons, bring me what I gave you.” One brought out the table with <the loaf baked of> fine flour on it, and with the tablecloth spread over it. And the other brought out his wheat in a basket with the bundle of flax over the wheat grains. What a shame! What a disgrace! Need it be asked which of the two servants was the more beloved? He, of course, who laid out the table with <the loaf baked of> fine flour upon it. [...] The truth is, when the Holy One gave the Torah to Israel, He gave it to them as wheat out of which the fine flour of Mishnah was to be produced and as flax out of which the fine linen cloth of Mishnah was to be produced<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> K. SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent. A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI 2008) 535.

<sup>2</sup> *Tann de-bê Eliyahu Zutah* as translated in W.G. BRAUDE – I.J. KAPSTEIN, *Tanna debê Eliyyahu. The Lore of the School of Elijah* (Philadelphia, PA 1981) 368.

Here is the pattern of a master giving something to his servants/slaves and rewarding the one who produced something out of what was given. A similar pattern is found in a parable which illustrates the difference between love and fear:

What is the difference between love and fear? [The distinction] may be illustrated through a parable. To what may the master be compared? To a king who had two servants. One loved the king and feared him. The other feared the king but did not love him. The king went into a far country. The servant who loved the king and feared him rose up to plant gardens, orchards and all varieties of fruits. The servant who feared the king remained inactive and did nothing at all. Upon returning from the far country, the king saw the gardens, orchards and many varieties of fruits arrayed before him according to the design of the servant who loved him. When the one who loved the king came before him, he saw the many varieties of the fruits arrayed before him. He was greatly contented in correspondence to the joy of the king. But when the king entered the domain of the servant who feared him but did not love him, he saw all the desolate grounds which lay before him according to the failure of the servant who feared him. When the one who feared the king came before him, he saw all the desolate grounds which lay before him. He was greatly distressed in accordance with the anger of the king [...] Hence you learn that the reward of the one who loved [the king] was a double portion while the reward of the one who feared the king was only a single portion <sup>3</sup>.

The same pattern of reward for productivity and disgrace for inaction is in these two rabbinic parables as in the parable of the entrusted money, and it is important to keep in mind this fundamental similarity.

## II. DIFFERENCES FROM THE TRADITIONAL PATTERN

### 1. *What is Given to the Slaves*

The different examples chosen to point out this maxim, however, are also important. While the two rabbinic parables have the master giving physical materials that can be transformed (flour, flax, fields), the master in the gospel parable hands over money. What can be done with money? As Aristotle said:

There are two sorts of wealth-getting, as I have said; one is a part of household management, the other is retail trade: the former necessary and honorable, while that which consists in exchange is justly censured; for it is unnatural, and a mode by which men gain from one another. The most hated sort, and with the greatest reason, is usury, which makes a gain out of money

<sup>3</sup> *Tanna de-bê Eliyahu Rabbah* 25 (26).



itself, and not from the natural object of it. For money was intended to be used in exchange, but not to increase at interest. And this term interest, which means the birth of money from money, is applied to the breeding of money because the offspring resembles the parent. Wherefore of all modes of getting wealth this is the most unnatural (*Politics* 1.10.5).

Issler notes how Aristotle belonged to the ancient literary elite who “had a decidedly negative regard for those engaged in commercial trade and in business in general”<sup>4</sup>. What it does show, however, is a reaction to the change in the economic system, from an agrarian to a trading system.

## 2. *The Answer of the Third Slave*

The slaves in the parable of the talents are managerial slaves. The excellent essays of Jennifer Glancy and J. Albert Harrill have attuned us to note the roles slaves play in the New Testament. Following on the work of Keith Bradley<sup>5</sup>, Glancy has shown that in Matthew “the parabolic representation of slaves and slavery participates in and reinscribes the most basic and problematic elements of the ancient ideology of slavery [...] The representation of the slave’s body as a locus of abuse is thus pervasive in the Matthean parables, constituting the most prominent aspect of Matthew’s ideology of slavery”<sup>6</sup>. Harrill has shown how “the parable plays upon audience expectations from Greco-Roman comedy [...] parabolic slaves come [...] more from specific stock types of ancient comedy”<sup>7</sup>.

When we come to look at the parable of the talents (Matt 25,14-30), Glancy holds that “in no way are the slaves in the parable of the talents anomalous”<sup>8</sup>. “Slave morality is inextricably identified with the master’s interests”<sup>9</sup>. The “good” slave is the one who follows to the letter what his master wants, while the “bad” slave fails to do diligently what his master wanted. The first two slaves had so incorporated their master’s will into their own that they know how he would want them to behave<sup>10</sup>, and so they did not need explicit instructions as to how to behave. Matthew,

<sup>4</sup> K. ISSLER, “Five Factors of New Testament Economic Interpretation. Rohrbaugh’s Parable of the Talents”, *Journal of Markets and Morality* 20 (2017) 243-261, here 249.

<sup>5</sup> K.R. BRADLEY, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire. A Study in Social Control* (Collection Latomus 185; Brussels 1984).

<sup>6</sup> J.A. GLANCY, “Slaves and Slavery in the Matthean Parables”, *JBL* 119 (2000) 67-90, here 71-72.

<sup>7</sup> J.A. HARRILL, “The Psychology of Slaves in the Gospel Parables: A Case Study in Social History”, *BZ* 55 (2011) 63-74, here 70.

<sup>8</sup> GLANCY, “Slaves”, 88.

<sup>9</sup> GLANCY, “Slaves”, 76.

<sup>10</sup> K. MCCARTHY, *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy* (Princeton, NJ 2000) 21, 23-24.

by stating that the master gave to each slave “according to their ability” (25,15), in the master’s estimation of course, suggests that the master did not simply give the money to the slaves but that he expected them to do something with it. In fact, the first slave “immediately” began to traffic with the talents and gain (Matt 25,15-16). In Luke, the master is more explicit and tells them “to do business” (Luke 19,13). The first two slaves tell the master that his mina “has made” (19,16: προσηργάσατο; 19,18: ἐποίησεν) ten/five minas more. The language here resonates with Aristotle’s sense of money breeding money.

The “unprofitable” slave, however, treats it as a deposit <sup>11</sup>, and he uses a formula in returning the talent (Mt 25,25: ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν; Luke 19,20: ἰδοὺ ἡ μὲν σου) that reflects the Mishnaic expression: “Behold, yours is before you” (הֲרִי שְׁלֶךְ לִפְנֵיךְ) <sup>12</sup>. He has not followed the intent of his master. Has he implicitly rejected the use of money to make money?

### 3. *How Was the Money Used?*

In Matthew’s account, the master is away “for a long time” (25,19). In Luke, the time for the test of the slaves is not as open-ended as in Matthew: the throne claimant has to go to a distant country to claim the kingdom from a higher authority, and he has to undergo a judgment brought on by a party that opposed his claim to the kingship (Luke 19,12,14), but this would probably take no longer than a year to eighteen months, perhaps even less. How long would it have taken the slaves to double the money given to them? At an interest rate of 8%, the investment would double in 10 years, at 12% in 6 years <sup>13</sup>, at a rate of 20% <sup>14</sup> in 4 years. Finley estimates that the legal interest rate in the first century was 12%, and reports how Cicero complained about Brutus lending at 48%, and how the gain of 34% claimed by Pliny was not likely <sup>15</sup>. The rate of return in Matthew

<sup>11</sup> Note how a compound form of the verb ὀρύσσω (= to dig) — κατορύσσω — is found in a first or second century CE rhetorical exercise on deposits. See F. KENYON, “Fragments d’Exercices de Rhétorique Conservés sur Papyrus”, in *Mélanges Henri Weil* (ed. A. FONTEMOING) (Paris 1898) 245.

<sup>12</sup> *Baba Kamma* 9:2; 10:5. See J.D. DERRETT, “Law in the New Testament: The Parable of the Talents and Two Logia”, *ZNW* 56 (1965) 184-195, here 191.

<sup>13</sup> In the Syriac *Life of Symeon Stylites*, Simeon orders that the usury collected on everything should be halved. From the letter of Cosmas to the saint which is appended at the end of the Syriac *Life*, the interest was originally 12% per year (see R. DORAN, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites* [Kalamazoo, MI 1992] 159, 196).

<sup>14</sup> As in Babylonia. See M. HUDSON, “How Interest Rates Were Set, 2500 BC – 1000AD”: <https://michael-hudson.com/2000/03/how-interest-rates-were-set-2500-bc-1000-ad/>

<sup>15</sup> M. FINLEY, *The Ancient Economy* (Berkeley, CA 1973) 54, 117. See also R.L. ROHRBAUGH, “A Peasant Reading of the Parable of the Talents/Pounds”, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 23 (1993) 32-39, esp. 35.

would not seem to be out of the ordinary, but it would depend on how long the master was away. The gains of 500% and 1,000% in Luke are exaggerated. Trading would most probably have been a more lucrative, if more risky, approach. As Mark Cartwright has written, “The Roman attitude to trade was somewhat negative, at least [among] the higher classes. Land ownership and agriculture were highly regarded as a source of wealth and status but commerce and manufacturing were seen as a less noble pursuit for the well-off. However, those rich enough to invest often overcame their scruples and employed slaves, freedmen, and agents (*negotiatores*) to manage their business affairs and reap the often vast rewards of commercial activity”<sup>16</sup>.

When the slaves are seen as managerial slaves, the question arises as to how profits were to be shared. Derrett, following Dauvillier<sup>17</sup>, looked to the Hammurabi Laws which dealt with the relations between a trading agent and a merchant who had contracted with the agent to pursue a particular venture. As Driver and Miles propose, the law which discussed the cases when the agent did not realize any profit probably did not mean any profit at all, but rather a negligible profit. The agent was suspected of being dishonest or negligent and so had to pay a penalty, double the sum initially advanced<sup>18</sup>. The same question of responsibility for profit and loss was discussed in the rabbinic notion of *‘Iṣqā* transactions<sup>19</sup>. This was a form of transaction “in which half of the furnished capital constitutes a loan to the ‘businessman,’ or active partner, and the other half is held by him in the form of a deposit (BM 104b and codes). [...] It would seem that the profits from the loan part of the capital belong to the businessman and the profit from the deposit part, after deduction of the former’s remuneration, belong to the capitalist. [...] Another possibility, if nothing is stipulated, is that the businessman receives two-thirds of the profits, and bears one-third of the losses” (Yad, Sheluḥin 7:4)<sup>20</sup>. The variety of rabbinic opinions on this type of transaction suggests a lively debate as to how venture capital loans were to be treated so as to circumvent the prohibition of usury.

But who would get the profit from the venture? The master answers the “unprofitable” slave by saying that, if he had given the money to the

<sup>16</sup> M. CARTWRIGHT, “Trade in the Roman World”, *Ancient History Encyclopedia*: <https://www.ancient.eu/article/638/trade-in-the-roman-world/>

<sup>17</sup> J. DAUVILLIER, “La parabole des mines ou des talents et le # 99 du Code de Hammurabi”, *Mélanges dédiés à le professeur Joseph Magnol* (Paris 1948) 153-165; DERRETT, “Law”.

<sup>18</sup> G.R. DRIVER – J.C. MILES (eds.), *The Babylonian Laws*, 2 vols. (Ancient Codes and Laws of the Near East; Oxford 1960) 1:190.

<sup>19</sup> DERRETT, “Law”, 188.

<sup>20</sup> *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 13:153-154.

bankers, he would have gotten his own money plus the interest. This seems to assume that the master will get the profits. Yet, in allotting the money given to the “unprofitable” slave to the most profitable one, the master describes him as the one having the ten talents/ten pounds: δότε τῷ ἔχοντι τὰ δέκα τάλεντα/δότε τῷ τὰς δέκα μνᾶς ἔχοντι. Does the participle “having” (ἔχοντι) mean “the one who gained the ten” or does it mean that he actually possesses the ten? If the latter, then the slave seems to have pocketed the profits while the master is said to still retain his investment. The division of profit is not clear<sup>21</sup>. As R. Meir held, “A slave has no powers of acquisition distinct from his master” (*b.Kiddushin* 23b).

### III. THE ROLE OF THE THIRD SLAVE

Within this context, how is the response of the third slave to be understood?

#### 1. *The Excuse*

Dodd once argued that “[a]t a stage much earlier than that represented by the First and Third Gospels the point of the parable was felt to lie, not in the reference to the second advent, or to its delay, but in the specific treatment of the worthy and unworthy servants”<sup>22</sup>. Rather than accept the judgment of the third slave on the master, Dodd makes a moral judgment on the slave: he is “cautious” and he represents the Jew “who seeks personal security in a meticulous observance of the Law”<sup>23</sup>. Jeremias also holds that the third slave makes an “unconvincing excuse”<sup>24</sup>. Beare states that the master will not take his excuse: “Even if the slave had formed such an opinion of his master, this was all the more reason for him to try to make a profit for him”<sup>25</sup>.

#### 2. *Petty resistance*

The response can be seen as an act of petty resistance — the slave does not attempt to make a gain for his master, and so should expect punishment. His master characterizes him as slothful and wicked (*Matt* 24,26). Glancy

<sup>21</sup> One of the arguments against including *Luke* 19,25 may thus be misplaced. The slave would only have ten pounds, not eleven, as the master would have his original investment.

<sup>22</sup> C.H. DODD, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York 1936) 148.

<sup>23</sup> DODD, *The Parables*, 151.

<sup>24</sup> J. JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York 1963) 61.

<sup>25</sup> F.W. BEARE, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (San Francisco, CA 1981) 490.

holds that “the slave with a single talent incurs his master’s wrath because of an offense related to property: he has failed to increase his owner’s wealth” <sup>26</sup>. Derrett comments that the slave’s response to his master is “saucy” <sup>27</sup>.

Both of these readings of the third slave’s response, either as a weak excuse or an act of petty resistance, presuppose that the teller of this parable followed a familiar story pattern where an owner/master leaves on a journey and, on his return, recompenses his servants/slaves for their behavior during his absence. Those who act as the master would have them act are rewarded, whereas those who do not are chastised. Both Matthew and Luke see the parable as an example of the traditional story pattern. The discussion of the relationship between the two tellings in Matthew and Luke is long. At the end of his examination, Piotr Blajer concludes: “It is certainly not an easy task to explain these discrepancies and establish the relationship between the two parables [...] These results lead to the conclusion that both parables go back to the same parable proclaimed by Jesus. The apostles and the early community would then [have] preserved them in two independent versions” <sup>28</sup>.

Such a reading has Jesus telling this story to his followers to warn them to be ready for the coming apocalyptic judgment. It may not be imminent, but it is coming and will catch those who do not use wisely the gifts that God has given them. As Davies and Allison describe it in their commentary on Matthew, “[w]hether or not one uses the word allegory, this parable, like the preceding, is filled with obvious symbols. The master is Jesus. His slaves represent the church, whose members have received various responsibilities. The master’s departure is the departure of the earthly Jesus [...] The punishment of the evil slave represents those within the church who, through their sins of omission, condemn themselves to eschatological darkness” <sup>29</sup>.

Within this interpretation one finds various interpretations of “talent”. Armand Puig I Tàrrach sees here the call for Jesus’ followers not to seek security (“le riche de l’Évangile et aux devoirs familiaux”) but to risk all in following Jesus without exception <sup>30</sup>. As Jennifer Goodyer expresses it,

<sup>26</sup> GLANCY, “Slaves”, 84.

<sup>27</sup> DERRETT, “Law”, 190.

<sup>28</sup> P. BLAJER, “The Parable of the Pounds or Talents: One Story in Two Different Contexts”, *Liber Annuus* 63 (2013) 275-292, here 292. In this he is similar to B.B. SCOTT, *Hear Then the Parable. A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN 1989) 218.

<sup>29</sup> W.D. DAVIES – D.C. ALLISON Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (ICC; Edinburgh 1997) 3:402

<sup>30</sup> A. PUIG I TÀRRECH, “La Parabole des Talents (Mt 25,14-30) ou des Mines (Lc 19,11-28)”, *À Cause de L’Évangile. Études sur les Synoptiques et les Actes offerts au P. Jacques Dupont, O.S.B. à occasion de son 70<sup>e</sup> anniversaire* (LeDiv 123; Paris 1985) 193.

“[i]n contrast to the third servant who operates from a place of fear and scarcity and sees the talent as something he must protect, the first two servants receive God’s love as something to be used. They rush out into the world and are risky with love” <sup>31</sup>. For Cadoux, the third slave represents “some class of men who, being charged to fulfill a divine trust, defend themselves by appealing to their conception of God [as stern and harsh]” <sup>32</sup>. McGaughy points to the bitter characterizations of YHWH after the exile in Job 4,14; 10,16; 23,13-17; Ps 119,120 <sup>33</sup>.

This reading takes the parable as another example of the traditional story pattern. The context in which the gospel writers have placed this parable shows that they too took the story as an apocalyptic warning, following the familiar story pattern <sup>34</sup>.

### 3. *Attack on the Master*

But the slave has done more than commit an act of petty resistance and has been more than saucy or uppity. As Luise Schottroff succinctly states it, the third slave tells the truth <sup>35</sup>. He verbally attacks his master. The language in Matthew, where the master is called σκληρός, recalls the slavery imposed on the Israelites by the Egyptians (Exod 1,14; 6,9; Deut 26,6) and the Babylonians (Isa 14,3).

#### a. The Master as Thief

The slave identifies the master as one who takes what he did not lay down (Luke 19,21) and gathers where he did not winnow (Matt 25,24). Brightman collected pertinent texts from Plato to Aelian that refer to laws prohibiting anyone from taking up what he or she has not put down <sup>36</sup>. Plato even told what a person should do if he noticed someone acting in this way:

The man that first notices an act of this kind shall report it, if it occur in the city, to the city-stewards, or if in a public market, [914a] to the market-stewards; and if it occur in the country outside, he shall declare it to the rural stewards and their officers. And when such declarations are made, the

<sup>31</sup> J. GOODYER, “Risky with Love. Rethinking the Parable of the Talents Matthew 25.14-30”, *Crucible* (2018) 49.

<sup>32</sup> A.T. CADOUX, *The Parables of Jesus*. Their Art and Use (New York 1931) 106.

<sup>33</sup> L.C. MCGAUGHY, “The Fear of Yahweh and the Mission of Judaism: A Postexilic Maxim and Its Early Christian Expansion in the Parable of the Talents”, *JBL* 94 (1975) 235-245, here 244.

<sup>34</sup> See BLAJER, “The Parable of the Pounds or Talents”, 279-280; Scott, *Hear then the Parable*, 219-223.

<sup>35</sup> L. SCHOTTROFF, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Gütersloh 2003) 292.

<sup>36</sup> F.E. BRIGHTMAN, “Six Notes”, *JTS* 29 (1928) 158-165, here 158.

State shall send to Delphi, and whatever the god pronounces concerning the goods and him that moved them, that the State shall execute, acting as agent on behalf of the oracles of the god. And if the informer be a free man, he shall win a reputation for virtue, but for vice if he fail to inform; and if he be a slave, as a reward for informing it will be right that he should be set free, by the State offering his price to his master, whereas he shall be punished by death if he fail to give information (*Laws* ii. 913d-914a).

Note how even slaves are required to inform about such an action. To reap where one did not sow is also wrong, as seen in Plato: “And if any man wishes to harvest ‘choice’ grapes or ‘choice’ figs (as they are now called), he shall gather them how and when he will if they are from his own trees, but if they are from another man’s, and without his consent, he shall be fined every time, in pursuance of the law, ‘thou shalt not shift what thou hast not set’” (*Laws* 8.844e). Philo sets the same standard: “that a man shall not take up what he has not put down, neither out of a garden, nor out of a wine-press, nor out of a threshing-floor; and that absolutely no one shall take anything, whether it be great or small, out of a heap” (*Hypothetica* in Eusebius, *Præ. Ev.* 8.7, 358).

The opposite action, “to sow and not to reap”, is a curse in Mic 6,15 and Job 31,8. To separate the two actions is wrong. However, as David Fiensy describes the ancient economy, this is what was happening: “Ancient agrarian economies tended to be structured around two groups: the takers and the givers [...] The aristocrats did not engage in physical work and did not even live on the farms”<sup>37</sup>. The masters reaped from the work of the farmers who sowed. The slave has called his master a thief. David Steinmetz, even though he ultimately defends the master’s actions, has rightly described what the third slave did: “[the last slave] did it, he claimed, because he realized that he worked for a severe employer who exploited the weak and defenseless for his own profit [...] Interestingly enough, the master did not challenge his servant’s characterization of him as a severe and merciless man whose hunger for a profit overrode all other claims, even the claims of his own conscience”<sup>38</sup>.

This is a common judgment. For Smith, the third slave describes the master as one who “has no conscience where money is concerned”<sup>39</sup>. Jeremias describes him as “an inconsiderate and rapacious rich man” bent

<sup>37</sup> D.A. FIENSY, *Christian Origins and the Ancient Economy* (Eugene, OR 2014) 69.

<sup>38</sup> D.C. STEINMETZ, “Matthew 25:14-30”, *Interpretation* 34 (1980) 172-176, here 173-174. In the same article, Steinmetz also notes that “the majority of commentators on this parable tend to dismiss the servant’s claim as an excuse with no foundation in fact (174).

<sup>39</sup> B.T.D. SMITH, *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge 1937) 166.



on increasing his wealth during his absence<sup>40</sup>. For Ernesto Cardenal, the master is an exploitative capitalist<sup>41</sup>. However, as Fortna states: “[the master’s] unsavory and ‘ruthless’ character cited by the third slave in v. 24 — and tacitly acknowledged by the master himself in v. 26 — is usually overlooked, or simply taken as a given in the ‘realistic’ world of finance”<sup>42</sup>.

#### b. The Master as not Torah Observant

Again, the slave in Matthew is said to have buried the talent entrusted to him (Matt 25,18) and returned it whole to his master. A talent as a measure of money has been estimated as equal to twenty years of a day laborer’s wage, an enormous amount of money, not something that one would casually carry around. He takes extreme care of it as he buries it in the ground<sup>43</sup>. The mina, or pound, was equivalent to about four months’ wages. Thus, in Luke, the third slave wraps the coin in a napkin for safeguarding but does not go to extremes in hiding it in the ground<sup>44</sup>. In burying the talent, the third slave in Matthew treated the talent as something that had been deposited with him for safe-keeping, and not as a venture capital loan. He therefore acted in accord with what would be later rabbinic teaching: “Samuel said: Money can only be guarded [by placing it] in the earth” (b. B. Mešī’a). He returned intact what had been given to him to guard. He refused to do what his master expected of him, i.e. to gain money from money.

The master, on the other hand, has not followed the Torah. In his rebuke of the third slave, he asks him why he did not go to the bankers and gain interest (Matt 25,27/Luke 19,23). As Herzog noted, “the extent of the master’s greed is exposed by his reference to the bankers”<sup>45</sup>. According to the Torah, one is not to take interest from another Israelite (Exod 22,25; Lev 25,36-37; Deut 23,19-20; Ps 15,5; Prov 28,8; Ezek 18,8-13; 22,12). One presumes that bankers did not ask every client if they were Jewish or not, nor does it seem to have been a concern for the master. It is interesting in this regard how differently the slave who follows the Torah is treated in the version of the parable found in the Gospel of the Nazareans:

<sup>40</sup> JEREMIAS, *The Parables of Jesus*, 60-61.

<sup>41</sup> E. CARDENAL, *The Gospel in Solentinami* (Maryknoll, NY 1982) 4:38-48.

<sup>42</sup> R.T. FORTNA, “Reading Jesus’ Parable of the Talents Through Underclass Eyes: Matt 25:14-30”, *Forum* 8 (1992) 211-228, here 223, n. 37.

<sup>43</sup> See Josephus, *JW* 7.113-115.

<sup>44</sup> McGaughey (“Fear of Yahweh”, 239) interprets this action of the slave as Luke substituting “the napkin for burying in the ground to underscore his conviction that the slave did not mean what he said and, therefore, really deserved his punishment”.

<sup>45</sup> W.R. HERZOG, II, *Parables as Subversive Speech* (Louisville, KY 1994) 165.



But since the gospel [*written*] in Hebrew characters which has come into our hands enters the threat not against the man who hid [*the talent*], but against him who had lived dissolutely — for he [*the master*] had three servants: one who squandered his master's substance with harlots and flute-girls, one who multiplied the gain, and one who hid the talent; and accordingly one was accepted (with joy), another merely rebuked, but the other cast into prison — I wonder whether in Matthew the threat which is uttered after the word against the man who did nothing may refer not to him, but by *epanalepsis* to the first who had feasted and drunk with the drunken <sup>46</sup>.

Here Eusebius rightly notes that the consequences of the servants' actions are placed in the opposite order to the actions themselves, i.e. the one who hid the talent is accepted with joy, the one who multiplied the gain is rebuked, and the one who squandered the master's substance is cast into prison <sup>47</sup>. In this telling of the story, the master follows the prescriptions of the Torah. Fortna suggests that, in this version of the parable, "a possibly early social critique, with an anti-capitalist stereotype of the lifestyle of the rich, was evidently still at work as well, for Nazoreans and evidently for Eusebius too" <sup>48</sup>. As Rohrbaugh concludes, "neither the Nazorean author nor Eusebius its commentator could imagine commending servants who used a master's money for additional gain" <sup>49</sup>.

#### IV. THE STORY OF THE PARABLE

The traditional story of an owner/master who leaves on a journey and, on his return, recompenses his servants/slaves for their behavior during his absence has been radically altered in this telling where the third slave calls his master a thief, and the master is shown as one who does not observe the Torah. The emphasis in this telling is placed on the third slave's statement. Whereas the first two slaves are given half a verse each (Mt 25,20b.22b), the third slave speaks for two verses (Matt 25,24-25), and his statement is repeated by the master (Matt 25,26b). Also, the relationship of God to his people is often imaged as that of a master with his slaves, and it is important not to allegorize a parable. But would a story that is warning believers to prepare for the judgment of God put forward an image of a judge who

<sup>46</sup> Eusebius, *Theophania* 4.22 on Matt 25,14-30. The translation is taken from W. SCHNEE-MELCHER (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Louisville, KY 1991) 1:161-162.

<sup>47</sup> MCGAUGHY ("Fear of Yahweh", 240) does not note the inverse order of the consequences, and holds that the third slave "is let off in the Gospel of the Hebrews' account with a mere rebuke".

<sup>48</sup> FORTNA, "Reading Jesus' Parable", 225.

<sup>49</sup> ROHRBAUGH, "A Peasant Reading", 37.

is a thief and a person who does not observe Torah? So much depends on how one views the master. Jeremias had stated the problem clearly: “[it is] hardly conceivable that Jesus would have compared himself, either with a man ‘who drew out where he had not paid in, and reaped where he had not sown (Luke 19:21), that is, a rapacious man, heedlessly intent on his own profit: or with a brutal oriental despot, gloating over the sight of his enemies slaughtered before his eyes (v. 27: ἔμπροσθέν μου)”<sup>50</sup>. In a similar vein, Craig Evans asks: “Why would Jesus tell a parable whose hero is supposed to be a law-breaking, despised tyrant? In what sense does such a man model Jesus? In what sense are the servants who work for this man and assist him in his oppressive activities models for Jesus’ followers? [...] It is possible, if not probable, that Jesus originally told his parable(s) to illustrate how *not* to be a master and how *not* to be servants”<sup>51</sup>.

In the context in which Matthew and Luke have placed the story, the master is seen as rightfully angry with the third slave, since the teller is telling the story to warn his audience against a false sense of security. Both Matthew and Luke drew from the tradition and stressed the need for watchfulness before the coming of God in judgment, and both used the contrast between the faithful and unfaithful slaves to exemplify proper and improper behavior. As Snodgrass notes, “[a]t least three parables besides these two deal with the same themes of entrusted possessions, a master’s absence, and a later reckoning: the Faithful or Unfaithful Servant (Matt 24:45-51), the Man Going on a Journey (Mark 13:34-36), and the Wicked Tenants (Matt 21:33-45/Mark 12:1-12/Luke 20:9-18)”<sup>52</sup>. It is not odd, therefore, that this story of the different ways that slaves behave while their master is away should also have been seen, at some point in the early transmission of Jesus’ sayings, as illustrating the same need for proper behavior before the time when God comes in judgment. Matthew underscores this view by adding to the story language that had been used earlier to speak of what happens at the final Judgment: weeping and gnashing of teeth, being thrown into the outer darkness (Matt 8,12; 13,42.50; 22,13; 24,51). Luke achieves the same end by inserting this story into that of the Throne Claimant<sup>53</sup>. As Snodgrass observes: “Whatever else it does, the

<sup>50</sup> JEREMIAS, *The Parables*, 59-60.

<sup>51</sup> C.A. EVANS, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA 1992) 181-182.

<sup>52</sup> SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent*, 531.

<sup>53</sup> On this parable, see M. ZERWICK, “Die Parable vom Thronanwärter”, *Biblica* 40 (1959) 654-674; and F.D. WEINERT, “The Parable of the Throne Claimant (Luke 19:12, 14-15a, 27) Reconsidered”, *CBQ* 39 (1977) 505-514.

parable [of the Throne Claimant] assumes a time when people will need to be faithful before the kingdom arrives”<sup>54</sup>.

As such, Rohrbaugh argues that this text would have been frightening to a peasant, as confirming “his worst fears about the kingdom of God, suggesting that it worked exactly as did his daily experience: the strong trample the weak and are rewarded for doing so”<sup>55</sup>. It would have been a “text of terror”, “a cruel reminder [to a peasant audience] of their poverty and powerlessness”<sup>56</sup>. But the thrust of the story, as we have explored it, goes against such a view of the master. The teller has taken a traditional story pattern and turned it on its head by putting the emphasis on the answer the third slave gives to the master, in which the master is portrayed as a thief and one who does not observe Torah. The audience is warned not to be grasping for money. This message is in line with other statements of Jesus in Matthew and in Luke. In Matthew, the disciples are told not to worry about what to eat, drink or wear but to strive first for the kingdom of God and its righteousness (Matt 6,25-34//Luke 12,22-31); the rich man is told to keep the commandments and, if he wanted to be perfect, to sell all that he had and give the money to the poor (Matt 19,16-22). In Luke, Jesus pronounces a woe on the rich (Luke 6,24); he tells the disciples to make purses that do not wear out (Luke 12,32-34); he tells the parables of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16,19-31) and of the foolish rich man (Luke 12,16-21); when the rich tax collector, Zacchaeus, promises to give half his possessions to the poor, Jesus declares that salvation has come to his house (Luke 19,2-10).

So here in this parable, Jesus has changed the message from exhorting his followers to use well what has been given to them into a warning to the audience to not be swept up by the transition from an agrarian economy to a market economy. David Fiensy says that there are good reasons to think that this was the case: “Although some historians hesitate to affirm a market economy in Lower Galilee [...] I accept this characteristic especially in light of recent archeological discoveries. Archaeologists have revealed that at least four villages were producing and marketing their wares for the rest of Lower Galilee and even beyond: Kefar Hananya, Kefar Shikhin, Bethlehem of Galilee, and Kefar Reina”<sup>57</sup>.

Fiensy concedes that “[the market economy in Lower Galilee in the time of Jesus and Antipas] had started down the road described by [Karl]

<sup>54</sup> SNODGRASS, *Stories with Intent*, 539.

<sup>55</sup> ROHRBAUGH, “A Peasant Reading”, 35b.

<sup>56</sup> FORTNA, “Reading Jesus’ Parable”, 223.

<sup>57</sup> D. FIENSY, “Ancient Economy and the New Testament”, in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament* (eds. D. NEUFELD – R.E. DEMARIS) (London 2010) 194-206, here 202.

Polanyi but had not advanced very far”<sup>58</sup>. Indeed, Sean Freyne holds that “the market economy [in Galilee], far from bringing about an improved situation, was highly exploitative and created an obvious rift between the ruling elite and the vast majority of the population”<sup>59</sup>. Richard Ford supports this view: “Given the impact in the early first century both of decidedly high levels of peasant taxation and of a growing commercialization of the land throughout the empire (commercialization that increasingly moved peasant land ownership from an inalienable right to a transferable commodity), it does not require the presence of revolution or even social banditry to infer that in the Galilee of the 20s and 30s there existed an ostensibly peaceful but nevertheless inexorably intensifying aristocratic expropriation of peasant land”<sup>60</sup>.

In light of the thorough investigation of Morten Jensen on the impact of the rule of Herod Antipas in Galilee<sup>61</sup>, however, one must be cautious. Jensen concludes: “The survey of the coin circulation by Syon strongly suggests the same thing: Galilee was not nearly as urbanized or monetized in the early first century as it was to become in the second century and beyond. [...] Antipas did not provoke any sincere swings in the probe zones needed to evaluate a society as being in rapid change or commercialized”<sup>62</sup>. Nevertheless, Mordechai Aviam has shown how the character of the houses, frescoes and stucco at Yodefat evidence three socio-economic strata<sup>63</sup>. The road to a more exploitative situation would seem to have been taken, with a noticeable division between the rich and the poor.

Fiensy further notes that for Polanyi “the increase in the value of markets tends to negate traditional institutions (such as family, neighborhoods, and religious convictions)”<sup>64</sup>. Within such a setting of a changing economy, the Parable of the Talents as understood in this essay would be a sharp critique of the behavior of the growing market elite and the neglect of the Torah statements against charging interest. Rohrbach had earlier

<sup>58</sup> D. FIENSY, *Christian Origins*, 79.

<sup>59</sup> S. FREYNE, “The Geography, Politics and Economics of Galilee and the Quest for the Historical Jesus”, in *Studying the Historical Jesus*. Evaluations of the State of Current Research (eds. B. CHILTON – C.A. EVANS) (Leiden 1998) 75-121, here 118.

<sup>60</sup> R.Q. FORD, *The Parables of Jesus and the Problems of the World*. How Ancient Narratives Comprehend Modern Malaise (Eugene, OR 2016) 34-35.

<sup>61</sup> M.H. JENSEN, *Herod Antipas in Galilee* (WUNT 215; Tübingen 2006).

<sup>62</sup> JENSEN, *Herod Antipas*, 256-257.

<sup>63</sup> M. AVIAM, “Socio-economic Hierarchy and its Economic Foundations in First Century Galilee: The Evidence from Yodefat and Gamla”, in *Flavius Josephus*. Interpretation and History (eds. J. PASTOR – P. STERN – M. MOR) (Leiden 2011) 29-38.

<sup>64</sup> FIENSY, *Christian Origins*, 79, where he refers to K. POLANYI, *The Great Transformation* (Boston, MA 1944) 163.

suggested that it is possible that Jesus did not commend the master: "After all, we have the statement of Jesus in *Gospel of Thomas* 95, judged to be authentic by recent scholarship: 'If you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give it to one from whom you will not get it back.' Similar statements are made in the Synoptics (Luke 6:35). Perhaps, then, we should assume a Jesus who would never have commended putting out money for gain" <sup>65</sup>.

The classic biblical image of peace was that everyone "should sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees" (Mic 4,4; see also 1 Kgs 4,25; Zech 3,10; 1 Macc 14,12; Isa 36,16). It is an agrarian economy. In the year of jubilee, everyone is to return to their own property (Lev 25,13). It is in contrast to this biblical economy that Jesus condemns the growing market economy. In this understanding of the parable, the master's response at vv. 26-29 would be an integral part of the telling, as they show the master to be not Torah observant in his claim that the third slave should have taken the talent to the bankers and so received interest, and the master also pronounces at v. 29 the economic slogan: "To all those who have, more will be given, and they will have abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away", which is to say: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Verse 30 is not found in Luke's version; it is full of Matthean images (e.g., "weeping and gnashing of teeth", as in Matt 6,12; 13,42.50; 22,13; 24,51; cf. Ps 112,10) and so would have been added to the story by Matthew. Fiensy holds that Jesus "criticized not the [ancient economic] system so much as the dominant partners of the system: the aristocrats" <sup>66</sup>.

As we have noted, Matthew and Luke placed the parable where they have, understanding it as following the traditional story pattern whereby the master rewards the productive servants and punishes the unproductive ones. It is the way these two Gospels have interpreted the parable that leads Richard Ford to suggest that "[Jesus] has biased his narrative in favor of our *not recognizing* [the endless process of elites and their co-opted retainers accumulating wealth at the expense of the vast majority from whom they take] [...] [His parable] elevates the voice of the oppressor. It obliterates the voice of the oppressed" <sup>67</sup>. However, if this parable is taken out of the context of the two Gospels and put on the lips of Jesus as he talked to people of Galilee, we can see that he was criticizing the movement towards a more monetized economy, which resulted in a widening gap between the rich and the poor. He was warning his hearers about

<sup>65</sup> ROHRBAUGH, "A Peasant Reading", 38.

<sup>66</sup> FIENSY, *Christian Origins*, 80.

<sup>67</sup> FORD, *Parables of Jesus and the Problems of the World*, 35-36.

what happens to whistle-blowers <sup>68</sup>, but also challenging them to be heroes as the third slave had been in pointing out “the unholy greed of the elite for what it was” <sup>69</sup> and insisting on following the Torah.

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#### SUMMARY

As indicated by its narrative placement, The Parable of the Talents (Matt 25,14-30; Luke 19,12-26) is understood by the gospel writers according to the traditional story pattern of an owner/master who leaves on a journey and, on his return, recompenses his servants/slaves according to their “good” or “bad” behavior. However, the response of the third slave which depicts the master as a thief and anti-Torah is a radical altering of this traditional pattern. Close attention to the historical setting of the original telling of the parable allows us to recover its intended meaning: a criticism by Jesus of the developing exploitative economy in Galilee.

<sup>68</sup> HERZOG, “Parables as Subversive Speech”, 167.

<sup>69</sup> ROHRBAUGH, “A Peasant Reading”, 38.

## MATTHEW'S "THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER" (MATT 26,14-26) AND THE PRICE OF A SLAVE <sup>1</sup>

Matthew 26,14-16 depicts Judas' agreement with the "chief priests" to assist in Jesus' arrest <sup>2</sup>. This triple-tradition passage is fairly consistent among the synoptics: Judas goes to the chief priests, arranges to deliver Jesus, is promised money, and they all look for the opportune time to take Jesus. But Matthew provides one salient difference: Matthew specifies that the agreed price for Judas' assistance is thirty pieces of silver. Matthew is the only Gospel to claim to reveal how much Judas received for his assistance. The first aim of this article will be to determine the historicity of this figure: was thirty pieces of silver the amount agreed upon for Judas' assistance? I will then discuss Matthew's motives for including "thirty pieces of silver", by considering two main possibilities: 1) he employed the figure in order to allude to slave prices in Exod 21,32; and/or 2) he employed the figure in order to allude to the rejected shepherd motif in Zech 11,12-13.

### I. THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER AS THE PRICE OF A SLAVE

Victorian scholars such as Alfred Edersheim <sup>3</sup>, Frederic William Farrar <sup>4</sup>, and Cunningham Geikie <sup>5</sup> found a parallel between Matthew's thirty pieces of silver and the slave prices found in Exodus 21, which specifies a fine of thirty silver shekels for an ox goring an enslaved person. These scholars argue that in Matthew 26 Jesus is sold for the price of an enslaved person as given in Exodus 21.

The sentiment expressed by this theological position is that Jesus allowed himself to play the part of a lowly slave. Such a position recalls a supposed messianic prophecy from Isa 53,11: "The righteous one, my servant [עַבְדִּי], shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities". Picturing Jesus in the role of an enslaved person also conforms to a Pauline statement about Jesus taking on the form of an enslaved person:

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks go to Mark Goodacre and Thomas Wayment for their recommendations on previous drafts of this article.

<sup>2</sup> All translations are from the NRSV, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>3</sup> A. EDESHHEIM, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (New York 1897) II.477.

<sup>4</sup> F.W. FARRAR, *The Life of Christ* (New York 1891) II.329, 369.

<sup>5</sup> C. GEIKIE, *The Life and Words of Christ* (New York 1879) II.460.

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Phil 2,5-7). Therefore, *if* thirty pieces of silver were the price of an enslaved person, then the theological implications might be worthwhile. We might find a connection between Matthean Christology, Pauline Christology, and even a supposed fulfillment of biblical prophecy. The concept of Jesus becoming an enslaved person on behalf of believers is indeed a concept found in Philippians. But whether or not Matthew uses this analogy is an open question that needs to be examined carefully.

Victorian theologians are not the only readers to notice the connection between the thirty pieces of silver and the price of a slave. Modern scholarly commentators also frequently mention this same connection. For example, John Nolland comments: “The same amount was the level of compensation to a slave owner whose slave had been gored to death by somebody’s ox (Ex. 21,32). But this is a minimum level, even for a slave. So Jesus’ life was being valued at something like the minimum level of that of a slave”<sup>6</sup>. Also, Davies and Allison, after discussing Zechariah 11 at length, comment: “There might also be an allusion to Ex 21,32: Judas reckons Jesus worth no more than a slave”<sup>7</sup>. The *Jewish Annotated New Testament*, when mentioning “thirty pieces of silver”, provides cross-references to both Exod 21,32 and Zech 11,12-13<sup>8</sup>. Lastly, Daniel Harrington states: “When Judas offers to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt 26,14-16), the price matches the value placed on a slave gored by an ox (Exod 21,32)”<sup>9</sup>.

Some may retort that a study of this type is not necessary because contemporary commentators do not hold that Jesus was sold for the price of an enslaved person. While this idea may not be the current academic consensus, I have demonstrated that current commentaries do indeed contain this idea as a valid possibility. Additionally, avoiding the assertion of an idea is not an explicit rejection of it, since the idea could always be revived if a solid case has not been made against it.

<sup>6</sup> J. NOLLAND, *The Gospel of Matthew. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI 2005) 1060. Note that Exod 21,32 does not state that the slave must be gored *to death* in order to receive recompense.

<sup>7</sup> W.D. DAVIES – D.C. ALLISON, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh 1997) III.452.

<sup>8</sup> A.J. LEVINE – M.Z. BRETTLER (eds), *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Oxford 2011) 48.

<sup>9</sup> D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP; Collegeville, MN 1991) 364.



The text is unclear as to exactly which currency Matthew intends with τριάκοντα ἀργύρια at Matt 26,15. Codex Bezae and a few Latin witnesses attempt to correct this ambiguity by substituting στατήρας (shekels) in place of ἀργύρια. Similarly, minuscule 1, the pre-corrected reading of 1582 (a very close relative of minuscule 1), 205 and 2886 (descendents of minuscule 1), and a Latin witness add στατήρας while retaining ἀργύρια reading τριάκοντα στατήρας ἀργυρίου<sup>10</sup>. Davies and Allison comment: "The denomination of the thirty silver pieces is not given. If they are Tyrian shekels, as the use of Zech 11,12-13 implies, Judas gains the equivalent of about four months of minimum wage"<sup>11</sup>. He receives the money from the chief priests and returns it to them *in the temple* (Matt 27,5). Since the shekel is the temple currency<sup>12</sup>, it would seem obvious that the money given to Judas must have been shekels<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, we can conclude that Matthew's figure of thirty pieces of silver was thirty silver shekels which equal 120 Attic drachma/denarii<sup>14</sup>.

Although the present author is not convinced that thirty pieces of silver is the actual historical amount of money Judas received for betraying Jesus, the actual amount does not much matter either way. At least two possibilities exist: that Matthew inserted the figure of thirty pieces of silver in order to parallel Jewish scripture or that thirty pieces of silver was in fact the actual amount of money received and Matthew wrote his narrative

<sup>10</sup> τριάκοντα στατήρας 05 a b q r<sup>1</sup>; τριάκοντα στατήρας ἀργυρίου 1 1582\* 205 2886 h.

<sup>11</sup> DAVIES – ALLISON, *Matthew*, III.452. See also *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (48): "The silver coin most likely in circulation at this time that could correspond to a shekel was the Athenian tetradrachma (four drachmas), the rough equivalent of four denarii. A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer, so the fee mentioned here is 120 days' wages"; NOLLAND, *Matthew*, 1060: "The 'thirty pieces of silver' is normally thought to mean thirty *shekels*, that is, thirty double drachmas of silver"; LUZ, *Matthew*, 345: "We are not told how much money that is, since all coins from the denarius on up are made of silver. Thirty denarii would correspond roughly to the amount a day laborer would earn in a month (cf. 20:2). If one thinks of twice that amount, thirty double drachmas, that would correspond to the price for the redemption of a slave according to Exod 21:32 LXX. If one thinks of shekels, the temple currency, that would mean an amount four times as great. In any case, the text is not interested in the exact value. The amount would have seemed low to most readers"; and M.W. HOLMES, "Codex Bezae as a Recension of the Gospels", in *Codex Bezae. Studies from the Lunel Colloquium*, June 1994 (eds. D.C. PARKER – C.-B. AMPHOUX) (NTTS 22; Leiden 1996) 130: "The 'thirty pieces of silver' due Judas would in all likelihood have been paid in the form of Tyrian στατήρας. Thus the variant in 26:15 (ἀργύρια] στατήρας D a b q r<sup>1</sup> Eus<sup>pt</sup>; cf. στατήρας ἀργυρίου f<sup>1</sup> h) likely represents 'a learned correction, introduced into the text for the sake of greater precision'".

<sup>12</sup> LUZ, *Matthew*, 345: "If one thinks of shekels, the temple currency".

<sup>13</sup> LUZ, *Matthew*, 345: "In the history of interpretation the question of the monetary value of the thirty pieces of silver has been discussed repeatedly. The most widespread solution is that thirty shekels — that is, 120 drachmas — are meant".

<sup>14</sup> See LUZ, *Matthew*, 345: "a shekel (=στατήρ) corresponds to four drachmas; cf. 17:27". See also Y. MESHORER, *Ancient Jewish Coinage* (Dix Hills, NY 1982) II.51.

around that fact. I question the historicity of this figure due to its single attestation and due to it conveniently mirroring Jewish scripture, but I accept that these historical criteria have been under critique recently <sup>15</sup>. Whether or not the figure of thirty pieces of silver is historical has no effect on the fact that this figure was not the price of a slave, nor did Matthew hope his readers would find a connection between the thirty pieces of silver and the price of an enslaved person.

But what were Matthew's motives for mentioning the figure of thirty pieces of silver? Which biblical tradition is he invoking? Is Matthew alluding to the rejected shepherd of Zechariah 11? Or is he alluding to slave prices in Exodus 21? Could he be alluding to both passages? If the price of an enslaved person in first-century Roman Palestine was thirty shekels, then an allusion to slave prices may be certain. But if the price of an enslaved person is not thirty shekels then we may need to look for an alternative explanation. I will now show why I think that Matthew did not intend an association with the slave trade but rather an evocation of Zechariah.

## II. GRECO-ROMAN SLAVE PRICES

Many commentators have suggested that the figure for which Jesus was sold is the price of an enslaved person. However, before we can evaluate whether the thirty shekels given to Judas would represent the price of an enslaved person at that time, we must first examine slave prices in first-century Roman Palestine.

<sup>15</sup> Concerning the multiple attestation criterion, see J.P. MEIER, "Criteria: How Do We Decide What Comes from Jesus?" in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* (eds. J.D.G. DUNN – S. MCKNIGHT) (Winona Lake, IN 2005) 132-134; E.P. SANDERS – M. DAVIES, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London 1990) 323-330. For a critique of the criterion, see M. GOODACRE, "Criticizing the Criterion of Multiple Attestation: The Historical Jesus and the Question of Sources", in *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (eds. C. KEITH – A. LEDONNE) (London 2012) 152-169 (and other essays in this same volume). Krister Stendahl agrees that this figure is possibly unhistorical: "Judas returned the money he received. In 26,15 it is said to be thirty pieces of silver, in accordance with Zech 11,12f. The exact number could be an adaptation to the prophecy": K. STENDAHL, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Ramsey, NJ 1990) 197. Concerning the historicization of prophecy, see J.D. CROSSAN, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco, CA 1995) 4. Concerning the scripturalization of tradition, see M. GOODACRE, "Scripturalization in Mark's Crucifixion Narrative" in *The Trial and Death of Jesus. Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark* (eds. G. VAN OYEN – T. SHEPHERD) (Leuven 2006) 33-47; see also M. GOODACRE, "Prophecy Historicized or Tradition Scripturalized? Reflections on the Origins of the Passion Narrative," in J. BARTON – P. GROVES (eds.), *New Testament and the Church* (LNTS 532; London – New York 2015) 42-45.

The first notion of which we must disabuse ourselves at the outset is that slave prices were monolithic. In fact not all enslaved people would have been sold for the same amount. Any person who thinks about the issue for a moment will realize the truth in this claim. At all times and in all places throughout human history, the prices of goods have varied based on the current market, the quality of the product, and the perception of its relative value. This is to say that even if thirty shekels were a common price for an enslaved person in first-century Roman Palestine, not every enslaved person would be sold for that exact amount. Rather, an enslaved person's price was dependent on numerous factors including age, strength, skill, gender, education, health, etc.<sup>16</sup> Catherine Hezser reports that "slaves of workable age would usually be more expensive than infants and children, men would cost more than women, and slaves with physical and/or mental defects would be sold at 'bargain' prices"<sup>17</sup>. Stating that 120 denarii was the price of an enslaved person uncritically flattens the discussion of slave economics in Jesus' day. There was no set and agreed upon price for enslaved people in first-century Roman Palestine.

In the following I will demonstrate common prices for enslaved people in the ancient world. Exact figures from first-century Roman Palestine are scarce so I will employ figures from various places and times. While this procedure is sub-optimal, it is the best that can be done given the extant evidence. William V. Harris comments: "Even more difficult to determine is the anticipated average price of a slave, since we have very little evidence for the prices of unskilled farm- and household-slaves. If the anticipated average was 1,000 HS [sesterces = 250 denarii], a guess, but in my view not at all likely to be too low a one"<sup>18</sup>. Here Harris admits the difficulty with determining an average slave price and posits a figure of 250 denarii as an average price for an enslaved person. This average

<sup>16</sup> J.A. HARRILL, *Slaves in the New Testament*. Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions (Minneapolis, MN 2006) 125-126, observes: "The law required full disclosure of any defects in the merchandise [...] Other defects to be disclosed were disease or unsound health, physical or mental disability, lack of talent, or the tendency either to wander off (*erro*) or to run away (*fugitivus*). Each defect had to be declared directly on the advertisement placard (*titulo*) placed around the neck of a slave on the auction block (*castata*). One particular quality in a slave that Roman masters prized was education, especially literary and memorization prowess". See also C. HEZSER, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford 2005) 87: "Criteria such as age, gender, education, health played a role in [the different prices charged for slaves]"; and W.L. WESTERMANN, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA 1955) 100: "The prices which were paid for slaves during the first three centuries varied, as before, according to the age, condition, training, physical attractiveness, etc., of each slave. The asking price differed within each country according to the conditions prevailing in the various localities".

<sup>17</sup> HEZSER, *Jewish Slavery*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> W.V. HARRIS, *Rome's Imperial Economy* (Oxford 2011) 68.

is more than double the sum which Matthew says Judas received for his assistance.

A quote from Demosthenes (384-322 BCE) illustrates the degree of variation among slave prices. Although Demosthenes is from a very different time than Jesus and the exact slave prices are not applicable, the degree of variation among the slave prices is helpful. Demosthenes describes his father's businesses: "One was a sword-manufactory, employing thirty-two or thirty-three slaves, most of them worth five or six minas [500 or 600 drachmas] each and none worth less than three minas [300 drachmas]. [...] The other was a sofa-manufactory, employing twenty slaves, given to my father as security for a debt of forty minas [4,000 drachmas]" (Demosthenes, *Against Aphobus* I.9 [Vince, LCL]). Here Demosthenes states that his father's slaves who worked at the sword manufactory were worth at least three minas but most of them were worth five or six minas. One mina is equivalent to one hundred drachmas <sup>19</sup>. Therefore most of these enslaved persons were worth five hundred to six hundred drachmas. At the sofa manufactory it seems that these enslaved people were worth about 200 drachmas each. Here we see that enslaved people doing the same job can be worth different amounts (probably based on age, strength, skill, gender, education, health, etc.). We also see that enslaved persons performing different jobs are also worth different amounts. So here we have a range from 200 drachmas to 600 drachmas as the price of an enslaved person. Although the slave prices may not be applicable because of the anachronism, we at least see that there is not a categorical one-size-fits-all price for an enslaved person. Slave prices also varied by region. Catherine Hezser comments that "[i]n Egypt, for example, slaves seem to have been relatively cheaper, perhaps because most of them were home-born rather than imported. In Roman Italy handsome slave boys with a Greek education were sold for as much as 2,000 denarii" <sup>20</sup>.

Hezser shows that "500 to 600 denarii seems to have been the usual price for adult slaves in the Roman Empire, [but] much larger sums were paid for skilled men" <sup>21</sup>. A.H.M. Jones states that the common price for an enslaved person was 500 denarii but also shows how much slave prices can vary <sup>22</sup>. He documents examples of a seven-year-old boy being sold

<sup>19</sup> See R.S. BAGNALL, "Practical Help: Chronology, Geography, Measures, Currency, Names, Prosopography, and Technical Vocabulary", in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology* (ed. R.S. BAGNALL) (Oxford 2009) 189; see also K. HOPKINS, *Conquerors and Slaves* (Cambridge 1978) xiv.

<sup>20</sup> HEZSER, *Jewish Slavery*, 248.

<sup>21</sup> HEZSER, *Jewish Slavery*, 87.

<sup>22</sup> A.H.M. JONES, "Slavery in the Ancient World", in *Slavery in Classical Antiquity* (ed. M.I. FINLEY) (Cambridge 1960) 9-10.

for 200 denarii; a twelve year old Phrygian girl for 350 denarii; a 6 year old Dacian girl for 205 denarii; a Cretan woman 420 denarii; a Greek man 600 denarii; a Marmarican woman 625 denarii. Columella tells of a purchase price of 8,000 sesterces [=2,000 denarii] for a vinedresser slave (Columella, *De Re Rustica* 3.3.6).

Egyptian papyrology provides even more figures for slave prices. While Roman Palestine and Egypt did indeed have different economies and different purchasing power, the data from Roman Egypt is helpful to at least demonstrate the degree of variation among slave prices and perhaps also to show that the average slave price was much higher than 120 drachmas. P.Gen.2.1.22, from 38 CE, records a sale of mother and daughter slaves for a total of 1,100 silver drachmas. BGU.1128, from 14 BCE gives 1,000 drachmas for an enslaved girl. See Table 1 for an extensive list of slave prices from relevant Egyptian papyri. From Table 1 we see that all of the prices from Roman Egypt are much higher than 120 drachmas. The lowest figure is from P.Oxy.336 from 86 CE with 140 drachmas for a house-born enslaved person. The editors of the *editio princeps*, Grenfell and Hunt, note, however, that this enslaved person was "probably a child" <sup>23</sup>.

Table 1 — Slave Prices in Egyptian Papyri <sup>24</sup>

Date	Catalog Number	Provenance	Slave Price	Description of Sold Slave
30 BCE - 14 CE	BGU.1059	Alexandria	500 drachmas	35 year old female slave
14 BCE	BGU.1128	Alexandria	1,000 drachmas	Slave girl
5 BCE	BGU.1114	Alexandria	1,200 drachmas	Male slave
38 CE	P.Gen.22	Hermopolis	1,100 drachmas	Mother and daughter slaves
45 CE	BGU.864	Arsinoe	2,000 drachmas	Slave girl
77 CE	P.Oxy.263	Oxyrhynchus	640 drachmas	8 y/o girl
79 CE	P.Oxy.375	Oxyrhynchus	1,800 drachmas	Mother and children

<sup>23</sup> B.P. GRENFELL – A.S. HUNT (eds.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Volume II* (London 1899) 308.

<sup>24</sup> See A.C. JOHNSON, *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*. Volume II. Roman Egypt: To the Reign of Diocletian (ed. T. FRANK) (Baltimore, MD 1936) 279-286; WESTERMANN, *Slave Systems*, 100-101; K. RUFFING – H.J. DREXHAGE, "Antike Sklavenpreise," in *Antike Lebenswelten*. Konstanz — Wandel — Wirkungsmacht. Festschrift für Ingomar Weiler zum 70. Geburtstag (eds. P. MAUTSCH et al.) (Wiesbaden 2008) 331-332; J.A. STRAUS, *L'achat et la vente des esclaves dans l'Égypte Romaine* (Munich 2004) 296-297.

Date	Catalog Number	Provenance	Slave Price	Description of Sold Slave
86 CE	P.Oxy.336	Oxyrhynchus	140 drachmas	House-born slave
124 CE	SB.5808	Arsinoe	200 drachmas	Girl
126 CE	P.Hamb.63	Fayum	1,400 drachmas	2 Prisoners of war
127 CE	P.Bour.16	Oxyrhynchus	1,200 drachmas	Girl
129 CE	P.Oxy.95	Oxyrhynchus	1,200 drachmas	25 y/o girl
136 CE	BGU.193	Ptolemais Euergetis	700 drachmas	8 y/o house-born slave
138 CE	BGU.805	Soc. Nes.	1,500 drachmas	Girl
143 CE	SB.6291	Soc. Nes.	2,250 drachmas	8 y/o and 15 y/o
154 CE	J.E.A., 1931, 44	Alexandria	2,800 drachmas	House-born male slave
154 CE	SB.6016	Alexandria	1,400 drachmas	Girl

Petronius (27-66 CE) provides a particularly useful figure because he writes during the first century and mentions a Jewish enslaved person. He states that 300 denarii was a bargain price for a sharp-witted Jewish boy (Petronius, *Satyricon* 68) <sup>25</sup>. Other slave prices from Jewish sources are only much later. For example, F.M. Heichelheim provides a small list of Jewish slave prices in Roman Syria which spans from 166-359 CE <sup>26</sup>. One enslaved person from 166 CE is a seven year old boy who was sold for 200 denarii. Another enslaved person was sold in 180 CE for 2,000 denarii.

Here we can see that the price of an enslaved person was actually not paltry at all. Documentary and literary Greek and Roman sources do not corroborate that thirty shekels (or 120 denarii) was the price of an enslaved person. I have been unable to find any example from documentary or literary Greek or Roman evidence of an enslaved person being sold for as little as 120 denarii.

<sup>25</sup> Petronius, *Satyricon* 68 (LCL, Heseltine): "He never went to school, but I educated him by sending him round the hawkers in the market. So he has no equal when he wants to imitate mule-drivers or hawkers. He is terribly clever; he is a cobbler too, a cook, a confectioner, a slave of all the talents. He has only two faults, and if he were rid of them he would be simply perfect. He is a Jew and he snores. For I do not mind his being cross-eyed; he has a look like Venus. So that is why he cannot keep silent, and scarcely ever shuts his eyes. I bought him for three hundred denarii".

<sup>26</sup> F.M. HEICHELHEIM, "Roman Syria", in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome* (ed. T. FRANK) (Baltimore, MD 1936) IV.165-166.

Philo provides the figures for people who have made a vow and says that the law has affixed a price to their vows. Many scholars have connected this concept of purchasing freedom from vows to slave prices. Philo states that the price of redemption for a male, age twenty to sixty, is 200 drachmas; for a woman, 120 drachmas; a boy, age five to twenty, is worth eighty drachmas; a girl, age five to twenty, is worth forty drachmas; a boy, from birth to five years, is twenty drachmas; a girl, from birth to five years, is 12 drachmas; men over age sixty are sixty drachmas; and women over sixty are forty drachmas (Philo, *Spec. leg.* 2.32-33). These amounts are identical to the amounts listed in Leviticus 27, which we will discuss below.

After all this, we see that slave prices varied drastically based on numerous factors and that the most common slave price was about five hundred denarii. A slave price of 120 drachmas (thirty silver shekels) would have been obscenely low — so low in fact that it could in no way have been historical. We can now conclude that Matthew did not intend to portray that Jesus was delivered for the price of a first-century enslaved person in Roman Palestine. No enslaved person in first-century Roman Palestine would have been sold for so low a price. Thus we see that *if* Matthew intends to allude to slave prices, then he could not have been referring to *actual* slave prices at the time of Jesus' death. Matthew could, however, be ignoring contemporary economics in favor of a parallel with a text from the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps he did not care so much that Jesus was delivered for the actual market price of an enslaved person but rather that the figure matched biblical slave prices.

### III. SLAVE PRICES FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE

The conclusion that Matthew was not referring to slave prices in Jesus' day but rather slave prices from the Hebrew Bible is tenuous because of conflicting information regarding slave prices in the biblical tradition.

#### *Gen 37,28*

The first mention of a person being sold for a specific price in the Hebrew Bible is Gen 37,28, when Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. This figure perfectly matches those given in Leviticus 27, which we will examine below.



*Exod 21,32*

The next discussion of money with respect to enslaved people is the reference in Exod 21,32: “If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall pay to the slave-owner thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned”. This passage in Exodus is the source for all the commentators who suggest that Jesus was sold for the price of an enslaved person. However, the figure in Exod 21,32 is *not* in fact a slave price but is rather a fine for damaging property<sup>27</sup>. There is a difference between a purchase price and a fine for damaging property. The rabbis of the Mishnah, although writing much later than Jesus’ lifetime, seem to have understood the difference between a purchase price and a fine when they decide that if an enslaved person is gored by an ox then the enslaver should receive thirty sela “whether [the slave] was worth a maneh or a single denar” (M. Bava Kamma 4.5). To the rabbis, the value of an enslaved person was irrelevant, and the thirty sela was a fine which was independent of the price of the enslaved person. Here in Exod 21,32 we have a fine and not a price. In fact, there was no set price for enslaved people in the ancient world. The reason the Hebrew Bible does not give an exact price for enslaved people was because it could not. Slave prices always fluctuated based on age, health, skill, etc. The law states a penalty for injuring an enslaved person, but it cannot set a static figure for the price of an enslaved person. This is further underscored by the fact that the law stipulates that if the ox gores a *male* or a *female* enslaved person then the fine will be thirty silver shekels. If this were a slave price then this passage is telling us that male and female enslaved people were purchased at the same price. But as we have seen above, male and female slave prices differ drastically. Therefore, this figure cannot be a slave price but is rather a fine for damaging property.

Another example of the distinction between a fine and a price in the Hebrew Bible can be found in Exod 22,1: “When someone steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, the thief shall pay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep”. From this passage we are not to believe that the price of one ox is actually five oxen. That the thief must pay five oxen is a fine — a penalty — for stealing the ox. His restitution has nothing to do with the actual price of the ox but is rather meant to dissuade theft. Similarly, Exod 21,32 does not contain a slave price but rather a fine

<sup>27</sup> See the interesting parallel in the Code of Hammurabi, 251-252: “If an ox be a goring ox, and it be shown that he is a gorer, and he does not bind his horns, or fasten the ox up, and the ox gore a free-born man and kill him, the owner shall pay one-half a mina [thirty shekels] in money. If he kills a man’s slave, he shall pay one-third of a mina [twenty shekels]”.

meant to dissuade ox owners from letting their oxen run wild. The intent of the passage is to inform all ox owners that if their ox gores an enslaved person then the owner himself will lose the ox and thirty silver shekels. This is not equal to the price of an enslaved person but is rather a motivation to ensure that an ox does not run wild.

The fine of thirty silver shekels is, however, loosely connected to actual average slave prices. As we shall see below in our discussion of Leviticus 27, the average price of an enslaved person ranged from three silver shekels for a female toddler to fifty silver shekels for a man aged twenty to sixty. This fine in Exodus 21 seems to be a compromising average based on general slave prices. Propp comments: "Since the price of a slave varied, ibn Ezra (shorter commentary) plausibly opines that thirty shekels is the *average* price of a slave" <sup>28</sup>.

#### *Lev 27,2-8*

Important evidence for determining average slave prices in the Hebrew Bible is found in Lev 27,2-8:

<sup>2</sup> Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When a person makes an explicit vow to the LORD concerning the equivalent for a human being, <sup>3</sup> the equivalent for a male shall be: from twenty to sixty years of age the equivalent shall be fifty shekels of silver by the sanctuary shekel. <sup>4</sup> If the person is a female, the equivalent is thirty shekels. <sup>5</sup> If the age is from five to twenty years of age, the equivalent is twenty shekels for a male and ten shekels for a female. <sup>6</sup> If the age is from one month to five years, the equivalent for a male is five shekels of silver, and for a female the equivalent is three shekels of silver. <sup>7</sup> And if the person is sixty years old or over, then the equivalent for a male is fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. <sup>8</sup> If any cannot afford the equivalent, they shall be brought before the priest and the priest shall assess them; the priest shall assess them according to what each one making a vow can afford.

This passage outlines much more believable slave prices than are found in Exodus 21. However, the exact context of this passage is ambiguous. It says that this is the price for those who have made a vow to the Lord. But what does that have to do with slave prices? G.J. Wenham explains:

The rationale for these figures is that they represent the price of slaves of different age and sex in ancient Israel. The legal fiction underlying these payments is that a man could vow himself or a member of his family to the service of God (1 Sam 1,11). He made himself God's slave as it were (2 Sam 15). But of course under the law only the priests and Levites could minister in

<sup>28</sup> W.H.C. PROPP, *Exodus 19–40* (AB 2A; New York 2006) 236, emphasis in original.

the sanctuary; the ordinary Israelite was debarred from such divine slavery (Num 3). The clash between the vow and the law's demands was circumvented by allowing those who made such vows to buy their freedom from sanctuary service by paying the priest the average price for a slave of their own age and sex <sup>29</sup>.

Wenham also explains that the prices listed here in Leviticus 27 "closely correspond to the prices of slaves mentioned in extra-biblical texts of the first and second millennia B.C." <sup>30</sup>, and that the ratio between male and female prices is consistent with those of slave prices. Lastly, he connects these prices with the amount for which Joseph was sold in Genesis 37. Therefore, if slave prices do exist in the Hebrew Bible, then a much better example of them is here in Leviticus 27. Jacob Milgrom agrees: "The values in this section probably prevailed in the slave markets" <sup>31</sup>. Further evidence that this passage concerns slave prices is that it matches perfectly with the slave price list that Philo cites in *Spec. leg.* 2,32-33 (as quoted above). So here we have a good example of average slave prices in Hebrew Bible. Therefore, if Matthew had intended to report that Jesus was sold for the price of an enslaved person according to the slave prices found in the Hebrew Bible, then he would have chosen fifty silver shekels, because Jesus was between the ages of twenty and sixty.

In light of what has emerged from our analysis, we can conclude that Matthew did not intend to allude to slave prices from the Hebrew Bible when he included the figure "thirty silver [shekels]". Rather, Matthew intended to allude to Zechariah 11.

#### IV. ZECHARIAH 11

There is still one possible way that Matthew could allude to slave prices from the Hebrew Bible. If Zechariah 11 contains slave price themes, then perhaps Matthew imported slave price themes into his account secondarily through Zech 11,12-13, which reads:

<sup>12</sup> I then said to them, "If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." So they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver.

<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it into the treasury" — this lordly price at which I was valued by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury in the house of the LORD.

<sup>29</sup> G.J. WENHAM, "Leviticus 27.2-8 and the Price of Slaves", *ZAW* 90 (1978) 264.

<sup>30</sup> WENHAM, "Lev 27.2-8", 264.

<sup>31</sup> J. MILGROM, "Leviticus", in *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (ed. W.A. MEEKS) (San Francisco, CA 2006) 191.

Davies and Allison include an ambivalent note: "Does Zech 11,12 allude to [Exod 21]?" All commentators on Zechariah 11 notice that thirty pieces of silver is the same figure as in Exod 21,32, but none claim that Zechariah 11 alludes to slave prices. Carol and Eric Myers point out the coincidental connection between slave prices but they do not claim that Zechariah had such a connection in mind <sup>32</sup>. They also remind us that there is not even verbatim agreement between Zechariah 11, Matthew 26 and Exodus 21. This is further evidence that Matthew is alluding to Zechariah 11: compare Matthew's τριάκοντα ἀργύρια to LXX <sup>33</sup> Zechariah's τριάκοντα ἀργυροῦς <sup>34</sup>. This suggests that Matthew is thinking about Zechariah and *not* about the price of a gored enslaved person in Exod 21,32. The LXX of the Exodus passage reads ἀργυρίου τριάκοντα δίδραχμα (thirty didrachmas of silver) <sup>35</sup>. Matthew's figure aligns more closely with Zechariah's than with the figure in Exodus. Joachim Gnllka confronts our issue directly declaring that in light of the strong connection between Matt 27,9 and Zech 11,12, the slave price from Exod 21,32 is of "little importance" <sup>36</sup>.

That Matthew fails to specify the currency, as does Zechariah 11, is uncharacteristic for him. When speaking of money, Matthew almost always identifies the currency. For example, we read of an unforgiving enslaved person who owes a vast number of talents (Matt 18,24; also the parable of the talents in Matt 25,14-30) and who is in turn owed 100 denarii (Matt 18,28; also the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matthew 20). We read of two birds being sold for a "penny" (ἀσσύριον, Matt 10,29) and how people are not able to get out of prison until they pay every "penny" (Matt 5,26; this time κοδράντης but NRSV translates both ἀσσύριον and κοδράντης as "penny"). Matthew also mentions a *stater* (shekel) and a *didrachma* in 17,24-27 <sup>37</sup>. Matthew's account of Judas in Matt 26,14-16

<sup>32</sup> C.L. MYERS – E.M. MYERS, *Zechariah 9–14* (AB 25C; New York 1993) 275. See also J.D. NOGALSKI, *The Book of the Twelve: Micah – Malachi* (Macon, GA 2011) 934; P.L. REDDIT, *Zechariah 9–14* (Stuttgart 2012) 86.

<sup>33</sup> All LXX citations are from the Göttingen edition, which does not list any variants at Zech 11,12 that would imply or specify a specific denomination.

<sup>34</sup> LUZ, *Matthew*, 345, comments: "That Matthew says ἀργύρια, and not as Zech 11:12 ἀργυροῦς, naturally has nothing to do with denoting more accurately and vividly the 'counting out of the individual pieces of silver to Judas' (thus SENIOR, *Narrative*, 47). Both terms are accusative plural, and both words have the same meaning. Matthew has simply borrowed from Mark 14:11".

<sup>35</sup> The only variants listed in the Göttingen LXX are ἀργυρου for ἀργυρίου, a few transpositions, and an orthographic variant of δίδραχμα to διδραγμα. All listed manuscripts include currency.

<sup>36</sup> J. GNILKA, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Freiburg 1988) II.391: "kaum von Bedeutung."

<sup>37</sup> For a concise chart of money in the Gospels and their equivalencies, see P.J. ACHE-MEIER – J.B. GREEN – M.M. THOMPSON, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI 2001) 110.

and 27,3-10, with τριάκοντα ἀργύρια, are the only places in his gospel where Matthew does not identify the currency when talking about money. This is because he is strictly following LXX Zechariah 11, which does not specify the currency of the pieces of silver.

If Matthew intended to convey slave themes in his narrative, then he chose to quote a passage which can only tenuously be connected with slave prices. A connection to slave prices in Zechariah 11 is extremely uncertain and difficult to defend. In fact, the figure, “thirty pieces of silver”, is also equivalent to the price of a female enslaved person associated with the temple in Lev 27,4. I am not persuaded that Matthew intended that Jesus’ price be interpreted as that of an enslaved woman linked with the temple, nor that of an enslaved person gored by an ox.

*Zechariah in Matthew’s Passion Narrative*

Matthew explicitly quotes Zechariah multiple times throughout his gospel, especially in the passion narrative, but we cannot treat this topic in detail here. Entire monographs have been devoted solely to this topic<sup>38</sup>. I will briefly sketch some of Matthew’s uses of Zechariah and will highlight the threads of Zechariah woven through Matthew’s passion narrative. Table two shows all of Matthew’s quotations from Zechariah.

Table Two: Quotations of Zechariah in Matthew’s Gospel<sup>39</sup>

Matt 5,33	Zech 8,17
Matt 9,4	Zech 8,17
Matt 9,36	Zech 10,2
Matt 19,26	Zech 8,6
Matt 21,1	Zech 14,4
Matt 21,5	Zech 9,9
Matt 21,12	Zech 14,21
Matt 23,23	Zech 7,9

<sup>38</sup> For more thorough discussions of the obvious and deep connections between Matthew’s passion narrative and the book of Zechariah, see C.A. HAM, *The Coming King and the Rejected Shepherd*. Matthew’s Reading of Zechariah’s Messianic Hope (NTM; Sheffield 2006); C. McAfee Moss, *The Zechariah Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew* (BZNW 156; Berlin 2008); M. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel*. The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield 1993) 52-81; and J. Miller, *Les citations d’accomplissement dans l’évangile de Matthieu*. Quand Dieu se rend présent en toute humanité (AnBib 140; Rome 1999) 245-276.

<sup>39</sup> Table taken directly from NA<sup>28</sup>, 868-869.

Matt 23,35	Zech 1,1
Matt 24,30	Zech 12,10.12.14
Matt 24,31	Zech 2,10
Matt 24,36	Zech 14,7
Matt 25,31	Zech 14,5
Matt 26,15	Zech 11,12
Matt 26,28	Zech 9,11
Matt 26,31	Zech 13,7
Matt 27,9-10	Zech 11,13

One of the most obvious uses of Zechariah in Matthew is in his account of the triumphal entry. Matthew explicitly quotes Zech 9,9 saying that Jesus' triumphal entry took place in order to fulfill the words of "the prophet, saying, 'Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey'" (Matt 21,4-5). Matthew then shows Jesus entering Jerusalem upon a donkey and a colt <sup>40</sup>.

Matthew quotes Zech 13,7 in Matt 26,31: "Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all become deserters because of me this night; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered''". Here Matthew places Zechariah's prophecy on the lips of Jesus as a prediction that his disciples will desert him after his arrest <sup>41</sup>.

Judas' story in Matthew is especially intertwined with Zechariah. In Matt 26,14-16 we read that Judas goes to the chief priests and asks what amount they will give for Jesus. They agree upon thirty pieces of silver. Not only does the figure of thirty pieces of silver match Zech 11,12 but the entire setting matches as well. In Zech 11,12-13, Zechariah asks for payment and is given thirty pieces of silver. He is then told to "throw [the money] into the treasury" (Zech 11,13), and he does so. Matthew aligns his story of Judas in Matt 26,14-16 and 27,3-10 with Zech 11,12-13. Matthew is also the only Evangelist to claim that Judas returned the money to the chief priests and elders in the temple (Matt 27,3-5), just as in Zechariah's account. Here we see an example of tradition being scripturalized: Matthew is familiar with Zechariah's account and writes Judas'

<sup>40</sup> For a thorough treatment of Matthew's use of Zech 9,9 in his triumphal entry account, see HAM, *The Coming King and the Rejected Shepherd*, 20-47; and MCAFEE MOSS, *Zechariah Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew*, 61-88.

<sup>41</sup> See MCAFEE MOSS, *Zechariah Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew*, 157-170; HAM, *The Coming King and the Rejected Shepherd*, 69-77.

story through the lens of Zechariah. Matthew includes his characteristic formula quotation <sup>42</sup> in Matt 27,9-10, showing that he is explicitly quoting biblical tradition <sup>43</sup>. Matthew quoted Zechariah in order to juxtapose the high priests as wicked shepherds with Jesus as the rejected good shepherd <sup>44</sup>.

Zech 11,14 also provides a powerful parallel for Matthew. After Zechariah casts the money back into the treasury, which Judas mirrors in Matthew, he reports: "Then I broke my second staff Unity, annulling the family ties between Judah and Israel". Zechariah's action of breaking the second staff cuts the ties between Judah and Israel. This is important to Matthew because he has Judas — the Greek form of Judah — mirror the actions of Zechariah. Matthew levies the themes from Zech 11,14 about Judah being cut off from Israel to show that as a result of his betrayal, Judas will likewise be cut off from Israel.

## V. CONCLUSION

All efforts to connect the amount given to Judas with the price of a slave should come to an end. The claim that Jesus was sold for the price of an enslaved person distracts readers from Matthew's true motivation in this passage: to mirror Zechariah 11, which provides a much better parallel and application than do slavery themes from Exodus 21. By employing Zechariah 11, Matthew "implicates Judas and the Jewish leaders for their rejection of Jesus as the divinely appointed 'shepherd'" <sup>45</sup>, and Matthew has "portrayed Jesus as the multivalent 'Son of David' — the *Royal Messiah* (Zech 9,9), the *Healing Shepherd* (Zech 10,2), and the rejected and martyred *Prophet-Shepherd* (Zech 11,4-14; Zech 13,7) who saves his people from their sins by his 'blood of the covenant'" <sup>46</sup>.

It is unlikely that Matthew alludes to a slave price from Exodus because a more accurate slave price from Leviticus is fifty silver shekels. Although

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of Matthew's formula quotations, see DAVIES — ALLISON, *Matthew*, III.573-577.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew incorrectly assigns his allusion to Jeremiah, rather than to Zechariah. This is easily explained: "It is usually assumed that Matthew attributed the prophecy to Jeremiah instead of to Zechariah on account of the story of the purchase of a field in Jer. 32.6-15 and of Jeremiah's visit to the potter's house in Jer. 18.2ff": E. REINER, "Thirty Pieces of Silver", in *Essays in Memory of E.A. Speiser* (ed. W.W. HALLO) (American Oriental Series 53; New Haven, CT 1968) 188.

<sup>44</sup> See MILER, *Les citations*, 265, 276.

<sup>45</sup> HAM, *The Coming King and the Rejected Shepherd*, 100.

<sup>46</sup> MCAFEE MOSS, *Zechariah Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew*, 188, italics in original.

it is possible that Zechariah 11 contains slave price themes from the Hebrew Bible, and that Matthew imports slavery nuance through Zechariah 11, Zechariah's connection to slave prices is just as tenuous as is Matthew's. Matthew included thirty pieces of silver to allude to Zechariah 11 and to mirror Jewish scripture.

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#### SUMMARY

Commentators discussing Matt 26,14-16 frequently mention that thirty pieces of silver was the price of an enslaved person. Matthew, however, is the only Evangelist to record that thirty pieces of silver was the amount received by Judas for betraying Jesus. This paper discusses whether this figure is historical and, if not, what Matthew's possible motive would be for inserting the sum in his account. After an analysis of Hebrew Bible slave prices and first-century slave prices from documentary papyri and literary sources, I conclude that this figure has no connection to slave prices but rather was used by Matthew to allude to Zechariah 11 and to depict the high priests as wicked shepherds and Jesus as the good shepherd.



## THE TEXTUAL TRADITIONS OF ACTS: WHAT HAS DISCOURSE ANALYSIS CONTRIBUTED?

### I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years various modern linguistic approaches have begun to make their way into the field of textual criticism to assess the character of textual variants <sup>1</sup>. One major effort is Jenny Read-Heimerdinger's application of discourse analysis to assess the character and message of the book of Acts in Codex Bezae. This effort first began with her published doctoral thesis, *The Bezan Text of Acts*, and then grew into a multi-volume textual commentary in collaboration with Josep Rius-Camps that compares Codex Bezae with the Alexandrian tradition <sup>2</sup>. As a response to this work the purpose of this essay will be twofold: (1) to evaluate Read-Heimerdinger's use of discourse analysis as the method by which she seeks to demonstrate the priority and Jewish perspective of the Bezan text of Acts, and (2) to consider the place of discourse analysis in the field of textual criticism more broadly.

As a test case on which to base evaluations I have chosen the Apostolic Decree in Acts 15 for a number of reasons. First, it is a text unaffected by the lacunae of Codex Bezae. Second, whereas variant readings that occur in clusters are often treated by textual critics as independent variants without considering the influence of other variants in the same vicinity, an approach using discourse analysis can potentially account for contextual influences that can shed light on the relationship between variants. The Apostolic Decree is suitable for this reason as well; it is issued in Acts 15,29 but appears proleptically in 15,20 and referentially in 21,25,

<sup>1</sup> See S.E. PORTER – A.W. PITTS, *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI 2015) 129-136, where a whole chapter in their mid-level introduction to textual criticism is dedicated to the use of modern linguistic principles in assessing internal matters of textual variants.

<sup>2</sup> See J. READ-HEIMERDINGER, *The Bezan Text of Acts. A Contribution of Discourse Analysis to Textual Criticism* (JSNTSup 236; Sheffield 2002); J. RIUS-CAMPS – J. READ-HEIMERDINGER, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae. A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition* (LNTS 257, 302, 365, 415; 4 vols; London 2004-2009). Since the fourth installment, Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger have published a fifth volume that is meant to serve as a complement to their commentary; see J. RIUS-CAMPS – J. READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Luke's Demonstration to Theophilus. The Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles according to Codex Bezae* (London 2013). Additionally, numerous sections of the analysis in these volumes are published as individual articles in *Filología Neotestamentaria*.

and each instance contains multiple variants that represent a complex, interconnected textual history. The decree thus provides an opportunity to showcase the ability of discourse analysis to account for interdependent variants. Third, discourse analysis is concerned with language in use — that is, the role language plays in its social environment. The particular set of textual problems of the Apostolic Decree stands to gain clarification from discourse analysis in this regard because of the exegetical difficulty of understanding the nature of the abstentions in the decree. The main exegetical question is whether the list of abstentions for Gentiles pertains to ritual (cultic) or ethical purity, and part of this issue concerns the alternative variants in the list itself, which is, among other things, a matter related to the social backgrounds of the competing textual witnesses.

As a procedure I will begin by introducing the problem of the text of Acts and Codex Bezae's place in it. I will then explain Read-Heimerdinger's linguistic approach to the text of Acts, first by outlining aspects of her discourse analysis model, and then by showing how her model is meant to validate her thesis. Next, I will evaluate the Alexandrian and Western witnesses concerning the items in the Apostolic Decree based on traditional criteria for assessing textual variants, which will serve to demonstrate that Read-Heimerdinger's argument contrasts with the evidence yielded from traditional ways of weighing evidence. Finally, I will show that the weight and nature of the evidence yielded from the text-critical analysis of the Apostolic Decree actually challenge Read-Heimerdinger's assessment regarding the Jewishness of Codex Bezae, which will challenge not only her thesis but also the validity of her method. From this exercise I will draw some conclusions regarding the use of discourse analysis in textual criticism.

## II. THE PROBLEM WITH THE TEXT OF ACTS

The text of Acts is unique among the New Testament documents as a text that exists in two distinctive forms — that is to say, the Western text of Acts contains so many differences from the Alexandrian witnesses that it is justifiable to consider it a separate version of the book in its own right. Moreover, the relationship between the versions and which one preceded the other are uncertain matters, but the decision made about one variant can carry with it the implicit statement of which book of Acts is seen as the preferred version. This problem has been a matter of scholarly debate ever since textual criticism emerged as a distinct discipline. It was in the eighteenth century when Bengel, Wettstein, and Semler identified the

Western group of witnesses, but Codex Bezae and the other Western texts were deemed to be of an inferior status <sup>3</sup>. It was not until the nineteenth century that developments in textual criticism allowed the rise of more developed hypotheses regarding the texts of Acts. Starting with this time period, I will provide a brief overview of the main hypotheses and methods that have characterized the history of this research, which will show where Read-Heimerdinger falls in this debate and what distinguishes her method from those who have gone before her. W.A. Strange has helpfully divided the history of research on the text of Acts into three periods based on major trends in the field of textual criticism. These include: (1) the period before World War II, where we find the classic solutions to the problem; (2) the post-war period, when we see the eclectic method exercising influence through scholars such as Martin Dibelius, before others emerge arguing for theological tendencies in the two text-types <sup>4</sup>; and (3) the period after 1970 when new directions arise that propose various nuanced views of the classical theories <sup>5</sup>.

The three scholars who stand out in the pre-war period as having the most influential hypotheses about the text of Acts are Friedrich Blass, James Hardy Ropes, and Albert C. Clark. Blass's thesis, which he first articulated in an 1894 article and then substantiated with a critical edition of Acts published in 1895 <sup>6</sup>, challenged the view of Westcott and Hort that the Western text is the result of a scribal copying process where scribes freely attempted to clarify the text with their own interpolations <sup>7</sup>. According to Blass, only a person who had personal knowledge of the recounted events could be responsible for the types of differences found in the Western text <sup>8</sup>. Blass's thesis, then, argues that the Western text with its generally rougher and wordier readings is the author's first draft that he later revised into a second edition, which the Alexandrian tradition

<sup>3</sup> See W.A. STRANGE, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (SNTSMS 71; Cambridge 1992) 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> I use the term "text-type" here and throughout this article strictly for the sake of expediency with an awareness of the problems surrounding the concept of text-types, especially that they were probably developed with only the Gospels in mind (the book of Acts belongs to a very different textual history); see D.C. PARKER, *An Introduction to New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge 2008) 171-174, 286.

<sup>5</sup> STRANGE, *Problem of the Text*, 1-34. The historical sketch in this section is indebted to Strange's review of these major time periods. However, the observations about the major views are my own and tie directly into the focus of this article.

<sup>6</sup> F. BLASS, "Die Textüberlieferung in der Apostelgeschichte", *TSK* 67 (1894) 86-119; F. BLASS, *Acta apostolorum sive Lucae ad Theophilum liber alter, Editio Philologica* (Göttingen 1895).

<sup>7</sup> B.F. WESTCOTT – F.J.A. HORT, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. Introduction and Appendix (New York 1882) 122-126.

<sup>8</sup> BLASS, *Acta Apostolorum*, 31.

reflects <sup>9</sup>. Whereas Blass convinced several scholars of his view, including Theodor Zahn, Eberhard Nestle, F.C. Conybeare, and J.M. Wilson <sup>10</sup>, the prevailing view in this period was established by James Hardy Ropes in his 1926 volume *The Text of Acts* in the monumental *Beginnings of Christianity*, a five-volume work edited by Kirsopp Lake, F.J. Foakes-Jackson (vols. 1-3), and Henry J. Cadbury (vols. 4-5). The scale of this project was the largest that had ever been done on the book of Acts at the time, and it was seen as so well done that it became the foundation for subsequent Lukan scholarship. Ropes's study explained the Western text of Acts as a revised version of the earlier Alexandrian text; it is neither the work of the same author (contra Blass) nor is it the product of isolated interpolations (contra Westcott and Hort). Moreover, while detecting in the Western text a distinct concern for Gentiles, Ropes concluded that the text was not systematically revised, as would be argued by later scholars, such as Philippe H. Menoud, Eldon Jay Epp, and others (see below) <sup>11</sup>. The last scholar of this time period whose thesis of the text of Acts gained adherents was Albert C. Clark, who argued from principles of abbreviation that the Alexandrian text is an abbreviated version of the longer Western text. In effect, Clark explained the omissions in the Alexandrian text as motivated by various contextual reasons that indicate the Western text must be the earlier of the two <sup>12</sup>.

If the theories of the text of Acts prior to World War II tended to address the problem with large-scale solutions, then one of the responses moving into and beyond the war period was the eclectic method (or "reasoned eclecticism") that argued that each variant should be treated in its own right before notions regarding the nature of the two traditions were permitted to inform analysis <sup>13</sup>. Martin Dibelius in particular argued for this method. He believed that neither the Alexandrian nor the Western witness should be exclusively followed (contra the NA<sup>27/28</sup> and UBS<sup>4/5</sup>, which never follow the Western reading when it diverges from the Alexandrian tradition), because neither invariably possesses

<sup>9</sup> BLASS, *Acta Apostolorum*, 32.

<sup>10</sup> See T. ZAHN, *Introduction to the New Testament* (3 vols; Edinburgh 1909) III, 8-41; E. NESTLE, *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the Greek New Testament* (London 1901) 224; F.C. CONYBEARE, "Two Notes on Acts", ZNW 20 (1921) 36-42, here 41-42; J.M. WILSON, *The Acts of the Apostles Translated from the Codex Bezae* (London 1923).

<sup>11</sup> J.H. ROPES, *Text of Acts*, III, *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles* (eds. F.J. FOAKES-JACKSON – K. LAKE) (London 1926) ccxxxiii.

<sup>12</sup> A.C. CLARK, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes on Selected Passages* (Oxford 1933) xlv-xlvii.

<sup>13</sup> See STRANGE, *Problem of the Text*, 12.

the original text <sup>14</sup>. Several other scholars of this time period, including George D. Kilpatrick, Matthew Black, and Max Wilcox, also adopted this approach, believing that each variant deserves critical attention <sup>15</sup>.

The discourse analyst can see in these two periods of textual criticism a tension between prioritizing what discourse analysts refer to as “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to analysis. On the one hand, a “top-down” approach considers how larger structures, such as a whole discourse, paragraphs, clause-complexes, etc., constrain texts at smaller levels, such as words, phrases, clauses, etc. This notion can also be extended to explain how context constrains text. This resembles the process by which the classical views have explained the character of the versions of Acts, with supposed contextual features influencing the variants in some way. On the other hand, a “bottom-up” approach considers how smaller units “add up to” or constitute the larger structures of the discourse. This notion can also be extended to explain how texts reflect and contribute to shaping their contexts. This approach correlates with reasoned eclecticism because variants are usually defined at the word or word-group levels of meaning (e.g., prepositional phrases, nominal phrases, etc.), and these are considered in isolation before looking at the influence that context might have exercised on a variant or group of variants. While discourse analysis can privilege one view over the other for various reasons, they are nevertheless seen as complementary, one approach being a means of validating or clarifying the findings of the other <sup>16</sup>. The text-critical studies on the texts of Acts, however, have not tended to treat the problem of the text of Acts according to this notion of bi-directional analysis, but has instead privileged one or the other.

Philippe H. Menoud is one example of a scholar who attempted to use the eclectic method to move all the way up to the level of theology. In a 1951 article, Menoud argued contra Ropes that there is indeed a systematic revision evident in Codex Bezae which betrays a distinct theological tendency <sup>17</sup>. By focusing mainly on the Apostolic Decree, Menoud argued

<sup>14</sup> See the chapter titled “The Text of Acts. An Urgent Critical Task”, a reprint of the original 1941 publication, in M. DIBELIUS, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. M. LING; New York 1956) 84-92.

<sup>15</sup> See G.D. KILPATRICK, “An Eclectic Study of the Text of Acts”, *Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of Robert Pierce Casey* (eds. J.N. BIRDSALL – R.W. THOMSON) (Freiburg 1963) 64-77; M. BLACK, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford <sup>3</sup>1967); M. WILCOX, *The Semitisms of Acts* (Oxford 1965).

<sup>16</sup> For further explanation on bottom-up and top-down processing, see G. BROWN – G. YULE, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics; Cambridge 1983) 234-236.

<sup>17</sup> P.H. MENOUD, “The Western Text and the Theology of Acts”, *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, Bulletin* 2 (1951) 19-32.

that the Western text contains an anti-Judaism tendency and an insistence on the greatness and unity of the church according to the features that separate Christianity from Judaism, including the Holy Spirit and Jesus as Christ and Lord <sup>18</sup>. Moreover, Eldon Jay Epp in his 1966 *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* went further in criticizing the top-down orientations of previous studies that tried to interpret the versions of Acts according to a reconstructed textual history and instead sought to identify a theological tendency in Codex Bezae through reasoned eclecticism. This work picks up on Ropes's notion that the Western text is concerned with Gentiles but, like Menoud, highlights the anti-Judaism tendency in the text and the way Christianity was set apart from Judaism <sup>19</sup>. Epp's intent, rather than seeking to determine the original text, is more concerned with explaining the textual history of Acts as a text that has been interpreted, and therefore changed, by copyists <sup>20</sup>. A major criticism of his work, however, is that he simply assumes rather than demonstrates the Western text to be a revised version of Acts, which heavily influences his conclusions of the development of thought in early Christian history.

The studies on the text of Acts since the 1970s, the third period, present, for the most part, revised and nuanced views of older theories, though there are exceptions. C.K. Barrett, for example, in a 1979 article responded to Epp's study, challenging the view that Codex Bezae has a theological tendency <sup>21</sup>. According to Barrett, if Codex Bezae has an anti-Judaism disposition, this characteristic does not reveal a theological development of Acts' textual history, but rather simply reflects Luke's own anti-Judaism theology, which is also apparent in his Gospel. Rather than being a tendency of the text, Codex Bezae exaggerates the anti-Judaism that was already present in it <sup>22</sup>. Barrett's hypothesis thus amounts to a return to Ropes's view, where Codex Bezae contains some revisions that display ethnic concerns.

Whereas Barrett's hypothesis is inclined more towards Ropes's view, it seems that French scholars in this period are more inclined towards Blass's view, which is observable in the works of Edouard Delebecque, M.-É. Boismard, and A. Lamouille. Delebecque is concerned with the style

<sup>18</sup> MENOUD, "Western Text", 22.

<sup>19</sup> E.J. EPP, *The Theological Tendency of Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis in Acts* (SNTSMS 3; Cambridge 1966) 41-164.

<sup>20</sup> EPP, *Theological Tendency*, 12-21.

<sup>21</sup> C.K. BARRETT, "Is There a Theological Tendency in Codex Bezae?", *Text and Interpretation. Studies Presented to Matthew Black* (eds. E. BEST – R. MCL. WILSON) (Cambridge 1979) 15-27.

<sup>22</sup> See esp. BARRETT, "Theological Tendency", 26.

of the Western variants of Acts; his conclusion is that both versions not only attest to good facility in Hellenistic Greek, but that the Western text's additions display the same style as the text in which both versions agree <sup>23</sup>. For Delebecque, this is evidence that Luke was the author of both versions, and that the Western text reflects Luke's later revision of the work <sup>24</sup>. Thus, Delebecque's hypothesis comes out as the inverse of Blass's. Whereas Blass believes the Alexandrian text represents the second draft, Delebecque argues that the Western text is the revised and expanded version. The work of Boismard and Lamouille, on the other hand, contrasts with Delebecque's at this point. Their joint effort amounts to a thorough investigation of the development of the text by means of accounting for stylistic evidence in the two versions <sup>25</sup>. Contrary to Delebecque, however, Boismard and Lamouille attempt to demonstrate that the style of the Western text more closely resembles Luke's Gospel, and therefore conclude that the Alexandrian text is a revised version done by the same author <sup>26</sup>. Accordingly, the position of Boismard and Lamouille is very close to that of Blass. In many ways, as will be shown below, Read-Heimerdinger's approach and conclusions share similarities with the study of Boismard and Lamouille.

A final study to consider, which is in certain respects set apart from those discussed above, is the work of David Parker on the whole of Codex Bezae published in 1992. Parker, assembling the insights from the most thorough studies on each of the Gospels and Acts in Codex Bezae, demonstrates the character of the whole codex rather than focusing exclusively on Acts. As the principal witness of the Western text-type for Acts, this is significant because Parker detects a theological tendency that spans the entire codex. According to Parker, "The text of Codex Bezae is our most eloquent witness to the fact that the early church could and did alter the transmitted sayings of Jesus [...] and of the apostles" <sup>27</sup>. Parker offers specific examples of Luke's writings that display this freedom — namely, Luke 6,4 and the Apostolic Decree in Acts, which in both cases Parker believes is an alteration meant to carry forward the theological importance of the original reading to a new situation <sup>28</sup>. Another means by which this argument is supported, particularly with regard to the text of Acts, is in

<sup>23</sup> E. DELEBECQUE, *Les Deux Actes des Apôtres* (EBib 6; Paris 1986) 212.

<sup>24</sup> DELEBECQUE, *Les Deux Actes des Apôtres*, 373-380.

<sup>25</sup> M.-É. BOISMARD – A. LAMOUILLE, *Le Texte occidental des Actes des Apôtres*. Reconstitution et rehabilitation (Synthèse 17; Paris 1984).

<sup>26</sup> BOISMARD – LAMOUILLE, *Le Texte occidental des Actes des Apôtres*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> D.C. PARKER, *Codex Bezae*. An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text (Cambridge 1992) 285-286.

<sup>28</sup> PARKER, *Codex Bezae*, 286.



Parker's comparison between the Greek and Latin columns of Acts (Codex Bezae is a bilingual codex). Here Parker finds that "there is, behind the Latin, a text of Acts which [...] lacked many of the additions and paraphrases so characteristic of D. The comparison of the columns has allowed us a glimpse of this older stage in the longer recension of Acts. The fairly low number of differences between the columns outside these additions suggests the older Latin version to have been derived from a shorter version of the present D text" <sup>29</sup>.

The purpose of this brief and selective sketch of the history of research is to contextualize Read-Heimerdinger's hypothesis in light of other hypotheses and approaches that have vied for acceptance. Read-Heimerdinger's approach stands out in this field for a few reasons. First, her thesis counters the previous views of Ropes, Menoud, Epp, and others who have seen a demonstrable concern for Gentiles or, stated negatively, an anti-Judaism bias in Codex Bezae, by arguing the opposite — that is, the character of Codex Bezae represents a predominantly Jewish view (see below). Her view also argues for the priority of the Western text according to a hypothesis very different from that of Blass and others who have often wanted to see Luke as the author of both versions. Finally, her approach has the potential to show evidence for her hypothesis from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective, which could set her method apart from many previous studies. Read-Heimerdinger's work needs to be more fully considered before an evaluation of the distinctive features of her approach can be given.

### III. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, TEXTUAL CRITICISM, AND THE TEXT OF ACTS

I will begin with Read-Heimerdinger's conclusion and work back from there. She states: "There is [...] a considerable number of factors that emerge from an application of the tools of discourse analysis to a comparison of the texts of Acts and that all point to the same conclusion — namely, that the form of the book of Acts attested by Codex Bezae predates that of the Alexandrian MSS examined" <sup>30</sup>. To evaluate this claim it is necessary to understand what Read-Heimerdinger means by "discourse analysis", what the tools are that she refers to, and how she makes use of these tools to support her thesis.

<sup>29</sup> PARKER, *Codex Bezae*, 249.

<sup>30</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 355.



According to Read-Heimerdinger, “[d]iscourse analysis looks at language as communication [...] It considers the formal features of language, but it also pays attention to the relationship between language and the real-world in which it is spoken or written”<sup>31</sup>. She goes on to clarify, “The general object of study for discourse analysts, then, is ‘language in use’. The larger concern is with the overall purpose of language as a vehicle of human communication. Within this concern, a discourse is viewed as a semantic unit”<sup>32</sup>. When a discourse is understood as a semantic unit, as it is here, it becomes essentially coterminous with the notion of “text” as a unified instance of language communication<sup>33</sup>.

Following the main lines of recent scholarship on discourse analysis<sup>34</sup>, Read-Heimerdinger concludes: “It is recognized that the meaning of a discourse is derived both from its internal features (its structure or form) and from the situation outside the discourse (the context, the people involved in the communication, thought processes, social conventions, and so on)”<sup>35</sup>. Based on this notion, Read-Heimerdinger expresses the need for an integrated approach, “which considers both the internal features of a discourse and its situation in the real world as two aspects of language that inherently belong together”<sup>36</sup>. The potential that this approach has for the problem with the text of Acts pertains to the lack of knowledge we have about its context; if the internal features must in some way reflect their context, then “discourse analysis can help us tell how to account for certain features in the text because they serve as evidence of such things as the identity and situation of the author or of the addressees”<sup>37</sup>.

In describing her methodological procedure, Read-Heimerdinger stresses that discourse analysis looks at language above the level of the sentence: “Discourse analysis looks not only at the sentence and its components but also at the larger units which group sentences together in an organized structure of paragraphs, episodes and chapters, for example, up to the level of the whole discourse”<sup>38</sup>. While it is unclear how Read-Heimerdinger

<sup>31</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 27-28.

<sup>33</sup> See M.A.K. HALLIDAY – R. HASAN, *Cohesion in English* (English Language Series; London 1976) 2, who explain that “a text is best regarded as a semantic unit: a unit not of form but of meaning”.

<sup>34</sup> The resources Read cites most often include BROWN – YULE, *Discourse Analysis*; D. SCHIFFRIN, *Approaches to Discourse* (Malden, MA 1994); and HALLIDAY – HASAN, *Cohesion in English*.

<sup>35</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 28.

<sup>36</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*; cf. SCHIFFRIN, *Approaches to Discourse*, 23-31.

<sup>37</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 31.

<sup>38</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 28.

defines paragraphs, episodes, and chapters as distinct semantic units, like that of a clause, or even that of a text or discourse, it is clear that she is concerned with explaining how smaller units of meaning are constrained by larger ones. She goes on to state that discourse analysis “looks for lexical or syntactical patterns and considers the factors by which they are established. It seeks to identify the elements that are central to the main idea of the discourse, and to establish how they are distinguished from the peripheral elements”<sup>39</sup>. As a result, it seems that Read-Heimerdinger believes that the analysis of lexical features and patterns of syntax is a sufficient means for identifying the larger ideas or contextual features that motivate their use. More will be said on this below.

The primary tools of discourse analysis in Read-Heimerdinger’s study are those that relate to cohesion and coherence, where cohesion is understood as a feature that holds a discourse together as a meaningful unit, and where coherence refers to the continuity of meanings that maintain the intelligibility of the text<sup>40</sup>. These tools include audience monitoring, deixis, markedness, information structure, and salience, among other tools<sup>41</sup>.

Read-Heimerdinger draws several conclusions from her discourse analysis of the book of Acts in Codex Bezae. In her study she analyzes a number of discourse features such as word order, the use of the article, prepositions, connectives, and other features such as the consistency of spelling and purpose of names and characters in Acts<sup>42</sup>. Each of these in some way identifies features of cohesion or coherence in the Bezan text of Acts. With regard to these discourse features, Read-Heimerdinger concludes that Codex Bezae “displays striking features of discourse cohesion”, much more so than the Alexandrian manuscripts<sup>43</sup>. Also, where the Alexandrian manuscripts tend to use unmarked connectives (e.g., καί), Codex Bezae makes systematic use of marked connectives (e.g., δέ) to achieve a “consistent forcefulness”, which functions to make sure that “the audience grasp[s] clearly what is being said”<sup>44</sup>. This contrasts with the Alexandrian witness, which “frequently appears flat and bland”<sup>45</sup>. She admits that this critique has been used to support the argument that Codex Bezae is a later revision of an earlier edition that more closely

<sup>39</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 28-29.

<sup>40</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 38-39.

<sup>41</sup> See READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 34-38.

<sup>42</sup> See READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts* 62-344.

<sup>43</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 350.

<sup>44</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 350.

<sup>45</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 351.

resembled the Alexandrian text-type, but she counters with the following argument: “The text of Codex Bezae does not resemble that of an enthusiastic storyteller who has got carried away with the pleasure of his craft. It is controlled, methodical and precise, and all concords with a single goal”<sup>46</sup>. For Read-Heimerdinger this counts as clear evidence that Codex Bezae could not have been a revision of an existing text at a late stage, and so it becomes possible (or probable in Read-Heimerdinger’s estimation) that Codex Bezae was actually the earlier of the two versions of Acts<sup>47</sup>. However, this judgment seems somewhat slanted because it presumes that a later editor would have been unrestrained in the revision process. Could not a skilled editor with a clear goal set out to accomplish the task of clarifying the text for a later audience? Numerous arguments have been made along these lines for over a century now, beginning with James Hardy Ropes, and including other scholars such as Philippe H. Menoud, Eldon Jay Epp, and David Parker, who see clear theological tendencies in the Western text. Unfortunately, Read-Heimerdinger does not engage with these views in detail nor does she offer any serious response to them<sup>48</sup>.

Read-Heimerdinger concludes that the textual variants between Codex Bezae and the Alexandrian manuscripts “reveal an underlying difference in the mentality of the respective editors of the two textual traditions”<sup>49</sup>. According to her view, Codex Bezae displays a particularly Jewish way of thinking, which repeatedly surfaces in the way the editor/narrator addresses “problems of practice and belief” from an insider Jewish perspective rather than from an outsider’s perspective”<sup>50</sup>. Thus, in Read-Heimerdinger’s judgment, the Jewish perspective factors significantly into the overall message that the editor of Codex Bezae wants to communicate. A consideration of the Apostolic Decree, however, will expose a bias in Read-Heimerdinger’s argument because an author with a Jewish viewpoint would have grasped the full significance of the background associated with the four abstentions listed in the Alexandrian manuscripts; the Bezan text, as I will demonstrate, actually displays a more limited Jewish understanding of the text<sup>51</sup>, and seems to emend the Apostolic Decree so not to confuse an audience that does not have Jewish ears to hear.

<sup>46</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 351.

<sup>47</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 351.

<sup>48</sup> See ROPES, *Text of Acts*, viii-x, who argues that the Western text was a deliberate creation of an earlier text. Cf. B.M. METZGER – B.D. EHRMAN, *The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford 42005) 307.

<sup>49</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 352.

<sup>50</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 352.

<sup>51</sup> Contra RIUS-CAMPS and READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Message of Acts*, III, 214.

Read-Heimerdinger's study tends to process information from a top-down perspective; she attempts to show how elements of discourse at the word-level (e.g., the article, prepositions, word spellings, and the like) and at the phrase-level (e.g., the position of adjectives and the nouns they modify, the position and types of genitives, among others) reflect the larger contextual factor of a Jewish perspective. The limitation here is that larger units of meaning such as full clauses and clause-complexes are not considered for the role they play in the variations between the two text traditions of Acts. It is with these larger units of texts that the development of ideas in a text can be more clearly observed, and it would seem that if Codex Bezae displays a Jewish perspective, this would be realized more saliently in the larger units of meaning. Read-Heimerdinger even states in her explanation of discourse analysis that "in its study of form, discourse analysis looks at 'language above the sentence'" <sup>52</sup>. Thus, in moving directly from words and phrases to a statement about the message of Acts, multiple levels of meaning are omitted that could contribute to either strengthening or refuting Read-Heimerdinger's argument. It is my contention that the additional clause added to the Apostolic Decree, καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλουσιν ἑαυτοῖς γείνεσθαι ἑτέροις μὴ ποιεῖτε ("and whatever you do not want to happen to yourselves, do not do to others"), is a major instance where the alternative readings in Codex Bezae undermine Read-Heimerdinger's thesis. Before coming back to make this point, I will turn to a text-critical analysis of the Apostolic Decree so that Read-Heimerdinger's methodology can be compared to traditional means of weighing variants.

#### IV. A TEXT-CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE APOSTOLIC DECREE

The main exegetical question regarding the Apostolic Decree is as follows: Does the list of abstentions for Gentiles pertain to ritual (cultic) or ethical purity? The answer to this question is determined in part by deciding how many items belong in the list; does the list contain four abstentions (i.e. things sacrificed to idols, blood, things strangled, and fornication) or three, where either "things strangled" or "fornication" is omitted? The answers given to these questions have profound implications for the function of the Apostolic Decree in the book of Acts because it directly relates to the issue in the early church concerning the relationship

<sup>52</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 28, quoting SCHIFFRIN, *Approaches to Discourse*, 23.

between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Further, what one decides about the place of Codex Bezae in this discussion greatly affects the resolution of this question.

### 1. *Considering the Witnesses*

The textual evidence of the number of items in the Apostolic Decree, as well as the particular items attested, can be divided into three groupings. First, the Alexandrian witnesses attest to the four items that appear in the NA<sup>28</sup> and UBS<sup>5</sup> base text, which include: 10~~α~~, A02, B03, C04, and Ψ044. Numerous other manuscripts not of the Alexandrian type also attest to this reading, including P<sup>33</sup> (sixth century)<sup>53</sup>, P<sup>74</sup> (seventh century), E08, as well as the majority of minuscules, the Byzantine uncials, and numerous attestations in the Greek Fathers. The second group is the Western text, which omits πνικτοῦ (or πνικτῶν), “what is strangled”, and adds a negative form of the Golden Rule in 15,20 and 29. Codex Bezae (D05) is the most important witness for the Western reading, but several tenth- to twelfth-century minuscules (323, 945, 1739, 1891) contain this reading as well, including where one scribe has cited Irenaeus and Eusebius as second- and fourth-century support for this reading in the margin of minuscule 1739.

A third group can be compiled that omits the item τῆς πορνείας. These manuscripts include P<sup>45</sup> (a third-century Alexandrian witness) and the Ethiopic witness, which dates to around the beginning of the sixth century. As for this third group, which includes an important Alexandrian papyrus, the omission of τῆς πορνείας is probably an attempt to harmonize the list according to Jewish table fellowship rituals<sup>54</sup>. Three items in the Apostolic Decree can readily be collectively subsumed under the category of food laws, but “sexual immorality”, not apparently relevant to table fellowship, may have been omitted for its apparent dissimilarity. Bruce Metzger comments that this consideration logically accounts for the absence of τῆς πορνείας, but he instead argues for its inclusion because it is more likely that τῆς πορνείας was the abstention that encompassed a warning against marrying in violation of certain Levitical guidelines (Lev 18,6-18), or marrying pagans (Num 25,1), or it could have encompassed pagan

<sup>53</sup> P<sup>33</sup> is a fragmentary account of Acts with only the lists in 15,29 and 21,25 being attested; the manuscript begins at 15,21, the verse immediately following the first list.

<sup>54</sup> R.L. OMANSON, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart 2006) 258.

worship, which offered religious prostitution in temples <sup>55</sup>. This response to P<sup>45</sup> assumes that all four abstentions have a direct dependency on Old Testament law, which could make the argument for a ritual background all the more compelling. However, recent scholarship has brought to light that the items in the list resemble an early form of the Noahide laws of Rabbinic Jewish tradition, particularly as evidenced in *Jubilees* 7–8, and this suggests that the four abstentions can recur together without being tied directly to the Old Testament <sup>56</sup>. Therefore, it is important to consider new insights into what the abstentions, taken together, meant in the social environment of Acts, and then to consider how τῆς πορνείας might have been interpreted and omitted in a later manuscript such as P<sup>45</sup> where certain contextual awareness may have been lost.

In the remainder of this article I will focus on the differences between the first and second groupings where most of the textual debate resides. Since James H. Ropes's book *The Text of Acts* was published in 1926, it has become customary to compare the witness of Codex Vaticanus (B03) and Codex Bezae (D05) as representative texts of the Alexandrian and Western text-types, respectively <sup>57</sup>. Thus, in the chart below I set these two texts side by side to show how they compare; the two texts are identical in several respects, only differing significantly with one of the abstentions.

<sup>55</sup> B.M. METZGER, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart <sup>2</sup>1994) 380. An often-recited option for the appearance of τῆς πορνείας is Richard Bentley's conjectural emendation that πορνείας was originally πορκείας ("swine's flesh"), which would keep the items in the list all pertaining to food. Rendell Harris made the comment in 1908, after referring to this conjecture, that Bentley was expected by his admirers to "deal freely in conjectures" (R.J. BENTLEY, *Side-Lights on New Testament Research. Seven Lectures Delivered in 1908, at Regent's Park College, London* [The Angus Lecture-ship 6; London 1908] 188). Fortunately, unattested possibilities such as this do not carry the explanatory power that they once did.

<sup>56</sup> See Z.K. DAWSON, "The Books of Acts and *Jubilees* in Dialogue. A Literary-Intertextual Analysis of the Noahide Laws in Acts 15 and 21", *JGRChJ* 13 (2016) 9-40; T.R. HANNEKEN, "Moses Has His Interpreters. Understanding the Legal Exegesis in Acts 15 from the Precedent in *Jubilees*", *CBQ* 77 (2015) 686-706. Cf. C.S. KEENER, *Acts. An Exegetical Commentary*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI 2014) III, 2260-2269. Others, however, continue to see a direct reliance on Leviticus 17–18: see, e.g., E.J. SCHNABEL, *Acts* (ZECNT 5; Grand Rapids, MI 2012) 644-645; R.I. PERVO, *Acts. A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN 2009) 376-378; D.G. PETERSON, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Pillar New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI 2009) 434-436.

<sup>57</sup> See PARKER, *Introduction*, 288. Ropes used the older scheme of "Old Uncial", "Western", and "Antiochian" to designate what are commonly referred to today as the Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine text-types, respectively.

Table 1: Acts 15,20

Codex Vaticanus (B03)	Codex Bezae (D05)
διο εγω κρεινω μη παρενοχλειν τοις απο των εθνῶ επιστρεφουσιν επι τῷ Θ̅Ν̅· αλλ̅ επιστειλαι αυτοις του απεχεσθαι των αλισγηματων των ειδωλῶ και της πορνειας και πνικτου και του αιματος	διο εγω κρεινω μη παρενοχλειν τοις απο των εθνων επιστρεφουσιν επι τον Θ̅Ν̅ αλλα επιστειλαι αυτοις του απεχεσθαι των αλισγηματων των ειδωλων και της πορνειας και του αιματος και οσα μη θελουσιν εαυτοις γεινεσθαι ετεροις μη ποιειτε
Therefore, I have decided not to trouble those from the Gentiles who are turning to God, but to write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols and from sexual immorality and things strangled and from blood.	Therefore, I have decided not to trouble those from the Gentiles who are turning to God, but to write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols and from sexual immorality and from blood, and whatever they do not want to happen to themselves, do not do to others.

The Alexandrian manuscripts, as well as the majority of other witnesses, attest to the four abstentions appearing in B03 above: (1) τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων, (2) τῆς πορνείας, (3) (τοῦ) πνικτοῦ, and (4) τοῦ αἵματος. Codex Bezae (D05) as well as 323, 614, 945, 1739, 1891, sa (a thirteenth-century Old Latin text), and other witnesses have the following statement after αἵματος or καὶ τῆς πορνείας <sup>58</sup>: καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλουσιν ἑαυτοῖς γείνεσθαι ἑτέροις μὴ ποιεῖτε (“and whatever they do not want to happen to themselves, do not do to others”). By adding this negative form of the Golden Rule, these witnesses effectively change the Apostolic Decree from what might be regarded as ceremonial restrictions of cultic purity into clear ethical demands <sup>59</sup>.

2. Argument and Evidence

The larger number of manuscripts and the priority generally given to Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus as the Alexandrian witness support the fourfold list that includes (τοῦ) πνικτοῦ (texts with and without the article are both attested), and this is the reading that is confidently given in the UBS<sup>5</sup> base text <sup>60</sup>. In the UBS<sup>5</sup>, Codex Bezae is consistently

<sup>58</sup> There is variance in the order of the abstentions in the manuscripts that attest the negative Golden Rule.

<sup>59</sup> See RIUS-CAMPS – READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Message of Acts*, III, 222-223.

<sup>60</sup> The UBS<sup>5</sup> divides up the textual problems of verse 20 into three different notes (6-8), all of which are interrelated, and so it is a little confusing that these would receive different ratings (notes 6 and 8 are both given {A} ratings and note 7 is given a {C} rating). It



considered inferior to Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. This, however, does not reflect the scholarly debate over the last century and a half where many scholars have advocated for the priority of Codex Bezae, which has made Codex Bezae a rival of the Alexandrian witness as the representative of the original exemplar<sup>61</sup>, or at least the earlier of the two traditions<sup>62</sup>. As a result, whereas the guiding principles of textual criticism should be carefully considered when weighing both external and internal evidence, enough scholarship has called into question the priority of the Alexandrian text of Acts to the point that the debate now largely revolves around matters of internal evidence. For present matters, however, I will consider both kinds of evidence in accordance with the traditional practice of weighing variants.

#### a. Considering External Evidence

When weighing textual variants, external criteria are generally considered to be more objective than internal criticism, and thus should be given priority before internal matters are allowed to give sway<sup>63</sup>. The date of Codex Bezae is generally considered to date to sometime around the year 400 CE<sup>64</sup>. However, the witness of Acts 15,20 attested in Irenaeus shows that the Greek reading (Codex Bezae is a Greek-Latin bilingual codex) dates to the second century when most scholars date the emergence of the Western text-type<sup>65</sup>. This suggests that the Bezan reading of Acts 15,20 is early<sup>66</sup>. Further, the term “Western” has been widely acknowledged as a misnomer because the characteristic readings associated with this text-type

appears that the uncertainty expressed with note 7 involves whether or not to take the article τοῦ with πνικτοῦ, and so the doubt is not related to the witness of D05 at all.

<sup>61</sup> K.E. PANTEN, “A History of Research on Codex Bezae”, *TynBul* 47 (1996) 185-187, here 185.

<sup>62</sup> READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Bezan Text of Acts*, 355.

<sup>63</sup> METZGER – EHRMAN, *Text of the New Testament*, 305-306.

<sup>64</sup> For a brief overview of the different opinions concerning the date of Codex Bezae, see D.C. PARKER, “The Palaeographical Debate”, *Codex Bezae*. Studies from the Lunel Colloquium, June 1994 (eds. D.C. PARKER – C.-B. AMPHOUX) (NTTS 22; Leiden 1996) 329-354, here 332. Whereas others have suggested a date as late as 450 and as early as the second half of the fourth century, Parker suggests a date of 400 with the intention of exercising “proper caution” (332). Parker agrees with Holtz that a fourth-century date is possible; since the scribe was versed in Latin (as was the first corrector of the text), the date needs to be determined by the Latin text, but Parker, unlike Holtz, is not convinced that the hand parallels the Livy Epitome (*P. Oxy.* 1532) well enough to push the date back to the middle of the fourth century (332). See also L. HOLTZ, “L’écriture latine du Codex de Bèze”, *Codex Bezae*. Studies from the Lunel Colloquium, June 1994 (eds. D.C. PARKER – C.-B. AMPHOUX) (NTTS 22; Leiden 1996) 14-55, here 25-30.

<sup>65</sup> METZGER – EHRMAN, *Text of the New Testament*, 308.

<sup>66</sup> The codex as a whole has been shown to share more textual connections with Irenaeus; see HOLTZ, “L’écriture latine”, 32-36.



have been found over a wide geographical distribution including some Eastern versions such as the Sinaitic Old Syriac and the Coptic <sup>67</sup>. Codex Bezae in particular has been shown to share numerous readings with Codex Glazier (Cop<sup>G67</sup>), a fifth century Coptic manuscript of Acts 1,1 – 15,3 <sup>68</sup>. Thus, based on a wide distribution and parallels with early witnesses, Codex Bezae carries notable weight with regards to external criteria.

The Alexandrian witness, like the Western text-type, is considered by many scholars to date back to the second century <sup>69</sup>. However, the number and distribution of manuscripts attesting to the abstentions found in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus far outweigh the reading found in Codex Bezae. As stated above, these witnesses include: 01 $\mathfrak{x}$ , A02, B03, C04, and  $\Psi$ 044 (all Alexandrian witnesses); P<sup>33</sup> (sixth century) <sup>70</sup>, P<sup>74</sup> (seventh century), E08, as well as the majority of minuscules, the Byzantine uncials, and numerous attestations in the Greek Fathers. Provided the rule that the best readings are more objectively decided by external evidence as opposed to internal criticism, the UBS<sup>5</sup> is well within reason to confidently side with the Alexandrian tradition.

#### b. Considering Internal Criteria

Before assessing the internal criteria for the different witnesses of Acts 15,20 it should be acknowledged that discourse analysis, by its own definition, is entirely relegated to internal criticism; it is concerned with what the text says. But more than this, discourse analysis considers why texts communicate in the way they do; it seeks to determine how contextual factors influence the production and content of texts, and so is concerned with what is going on outside the text (i.e., in the context of situation). The danger in this for textual criticism is that the further one ventures from the physical manuscripts themselves, the more subjective decisions become. This point is even more salient when dealing with texts where the context is simply unknown, or where, as with the case of Codex Bezae,

<sup>67</sup> METZGER – EHRMAN, *Text of the New Testament*, 307.

<sup>68</sup> See esp. E.J. EPP, “Manuscript G67 and the Rôle of Codex Bezae as a Western Witness in Acts”, *Perspectives on New Testament Textual Criticism*. Collected Essays, 1962-2004 (NovTSup 116; Leiden 2005) 15-39; M.-É. BOISMARD, “Le Codex de Bèze et le Occidental des Actes”, *Codex Bezae*. Studies from the Lunel Colloquium, June 1994 (eds. D.C. PARKER – C.-B. AMPHOUX) (NTTS 22; Leiden 1996) 257-270.

<sup>69</sup> See S.E. PORTER, *How We Got the New Testament*. Text, Transmission, Translation (Grand Rapids, MI 2013) 62; E.J. EPP, “Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism. Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century”, *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. D.A. BLACK) (Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 17-76, here 38, 41.

<sup>70</sup> P<sup>33</sup> is a fragmentary account of Acts with only the lists in 15,29 and 21,25 being attested; the manuscript begins at 15,21, the verse immediately following the first list.

many suspect that the text has been revised to answer questions in a different context of situation than the one in which the original author wrote. If a text is suspected as having undergone a thorough revision, then how can we tell whether it is the editor's or the original author's context that has been preserved in the text? Are there tools in linguistic or discourse analysis that can help us with this issue? I think that there are, but the subjectivity in their employment can create further issues of their own for textual criticism.

Indispensable, then, for the textual issues on Acts 15,20 are the principles associated with transcriptional probabilities. Generally, more difficult readings are considered more likely to be original <sup>71</sup>. Of the two readings shown in Table 1, neither is difficult to read grammatically or syntactically, but Codex Vaticanus has the reading that is more difficult to understand conceptually; this is evidenced by the variants within the Alexandrian manuscripts themselves regarding the inclusion of τῆς πορνείας, as well as by the failure of biblical scholars to come to a consensus on what the background of the abstentions are and whether they belong to ritual or ethical purity codes. The Alexandrian witness is more difficult and thus bears more weight than Codex Bezae. Second, it is generally accepted that shorter readings are preferred to longer ones <sup>72</sup>. By both word count and complexity of syntax Codex Vaticanus is preferable to Codex Bezae in this regard. Third, because Codex Vaticanus contains τῶν πνικτῶν and Codex Bezae provides the generalizing negative Golden Rule, Codex Vaticanus can be said to be less harmonized than Codex Bezae, making the former more likely to represent the original. These three points contrast with Read-Heimerdinger's conclusion, which is susceptible to a greater degree of subjectivity based on her appeal to context. After considering both the external and internal evidence, it is more likely that the Alexandrian witness of Acts 15,20 preceded the reading of Codex Bezae.

#### V. A RESPONSE TO THE ARGUMENT OF THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE OF CODEX BEZAE

To avoid downplaying both the importance of context for understanding textual differences and Read-Heimerdinger's emphasis on this in her

<sup>71</sup> While the maxim *lectio difficilior lectio potior* usually holds true, Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland warn that this rule should not be followed too mechanically (*The Text of the New Testament. An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* [trans. E.F. RHODES; Grand Rapids, MI <sup>2</sup>1989] 281).

<sup>72</sup> As the maxim goes: *lectio brevior lectio potior*, but again this rule should not be followed too mechanically (ALAND – ALAND, *Text of the New Testament*, 281).

approach, I will specifically engage her argument here that the perspective in Codex Bezae is more Jewish-minded than that of the Alexandrian tradition. Based on the way Read-Heimerdinger frames her argument, there are two options for responding to her view: (1) one could argue that the Alexandrian tradition contains a more Jewish-oriented perspective of the two, or (2) one could demonstrate that Codex Bezae contains alterations that obscure meanings that were contingent on a Jewish background and, therefore, is less Jewish-minded. The latter will prove to be more suitable as the Jerusalem Decree remains the object of analysis.

A selective survey of recent commentators shows a lack of consensus regarding the background of the four abstentions given in Acts 15, 20, 29, and 21, 25. Craig S. Keener, after considering four options, favors the Noahide laws as the most likely background, even while adding the qualification that he does not mean the fully formed list of Noahide laws that were a later development in Rabbinic Judaism, but rather a range of early Jewish traditions that attest to what God required from Gentiles based on retellings of the covenant made with Noah, which are found in *Jubilees* as well as Josephus and Philo<sup>73</sup>. Schnabel, surveying six options, argues for an Old Testament polemic against idolatry and a reliance on Leviticus 17–18<sup>74</sup>. David G. Peterson considers five views but argues for a so-called “scriptural” background and denies any other extra-canonical influences<sup>75</sup>. Richard I. Pervo does not consider various views, but simply explains that the precepts derive from Leviticus 17–18. In each of these views there is the commonality that the Apostolic Decree is influenced by Jewish religious texts, but opinions differ as to which texts are in view and how they relate to the decree.

The two major differences between the two textual traditions are the presence of  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  in the Alexandrian text and the presence of the negative Golden Rule in Codex Bezae. Both of these textual features need to be addressed. First, regarding Codex’s Bezae omission of  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger write:

Without the mention of  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$ , as in Codex Bezae, the three practices James mentions are the three essential things that a Jew must always follow in every circumstance, even if threatened with death; they are all contained in Leviticus 17–20 where Moses is given a series of commandments for all the people of Israel: idols (17.2-9; 19.4; 20.2-6, 27), illicit sexual relationships (ch. 18; 20.10-21) and bloodshed (17.2-4, 10-14). These laws are absolutely binding; infringement of them incurs permanent defilement and

<sup>73</sup> KEENER, *Acts*, III, 226-269.

<sup>74</sup> SCHNABEL, *Acts*, 644-645.

<sup>75</sup> PETERSON, *Acts of the Apostles*, 434-436.

carries the penalty of exclusion from Israel and even death if they are infringed (17.4, 9, 10, 14; 18.29). The Gentiles, according to James, should be required to respect the same mandatory laws <sup>76</sup>.

Thus, according to Read-Heimerdinger and her colleague Rius-Camps, the absence of πνικτοῦ (“things strangled”) makes the list of abstentions more intelligible according to the background text of Leviticus 17–20, and the idea is that Gentiles are to follow the Law of Moses insofar as these matters are concerned. James in Acts, therefore, espouses a theological position that Gentiles who become Christians are bound to the Mosaic Law according to the matters that applied to Israelites in any circumstance. However, this argument relies heavily on the word αἷμα referring specifically to bloodshed (i.e. murder) as opposed to the consumption of blood. This view is difficult to defend even if Leviticus 17–20 is the main background text in view because the consumption of blood is a major matter dealt with in these chapters (cf. 17,10-16). It may well be that πνικτοῦ hearkens back to the prohibition that no meat with the animal’s lifeblood still in it is permitted to be eaten; this would be the case if an animal were strangled rather than drained of its blood before it was cooked, meaning that its blood was still in it. As a result, the abstentions of αἷμα and πνικτοῦ appearing next to each other could be mutually clarifying.

However, Leviticus is probably not the only important text in view regarding the list of abstentions. The book of *Jubilees* has recently been shown to be much more important to the background of the Apostolic Decree than previously thought. Todd Hanneken points out that *Jubilees* is often cited in discussions on the Apostolic Decree, but not in an accurate way: “Somehow one verse from *Jubilees* made the list of what many scholars feel obliged to mention, but it is the wrong verse” <sup>77</sup>. The verse that scholars routinely cite is *Jub.* 7.20 where the phrase “fornication and uncleanness and all iniquity” is given in a list formally similar to the list of abstentions in the Apostolic Decree. Rather than focusing on this verse, however, Hanneken argues that the whole of chapters 6 and 7 should be considered because they refer to all the precepts in the Apostolic Decree.

Prohibitions concerning the consumption of blood are present in *Jub.* 6.7-8, 12-13, 38; 7.29-32. The lexeme αἷμα is also used with regard to shedding blood, which is employed multiple times (6.8; 7.23, 25-26, 29). Since the shedding of blood collocates with iniquity in 7.23, this suggests

<sup>76</sup> RIUS-CAMPS – READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Message of Acts*, III, 213.

<sup>77</sup> HANNEKEN, “Moses Has His Interpreters”, 697.

— according to discourse analysis tools of cohesion — that violence is included in “all iniquity” in 7.20. Scholars debate whether *αἷμα* refers to the consumption of blood, the shedding of blood, or both, in the abstentions in Acts, but most believe that only eating blood is in view. However, if *Jubilees* is a text residing in the cultural background of Acts, then a hypernymic use of *αἷμα* is quite plausible, which would subsume multiple issues pertaining to blood in the social context, encompassing both eating and shedding blood (i.e. murder). The additional collocation of *πνικτοῦ*, however, arguably clarifies that matters of consumption are more relevant to the context of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 for reasons including the matters of table fellowship that are raised with Peter’s involvement with Cornelius earlier in Acts, which is recapitulated at the start of the council. Such an explanation would be more oriented towards the concerns of Jewish Christians in multi-ethnic churches who were concerned with becoming ritually unclean in their contact with Gentile Christians <sup>78</sup>.

The significance of *Jubilees* as a background text still needs to be identified. This book, being a valued Jewish religious text that would have been widely used in the first century <sup>79</sup>, is one of the texts out of which the so-called Noahide laws developed and earned their name. These “laws” get their name from their inclusion in the rewritten Noahic covenant, a tradition that apparently traces back to a Book of Noah <sup>80</sup> and is also found in the retelling of the story of God’s covenant with Noah in the book of *Jubilees*, which is made into a conditional covenant contingent on the maintenance of purity that God re-established after his wiping away of a wholly polluted humanity in the flood. Thus, the Noahide laws pertain to Jewish codes of purity and pollution. Moreover, scholars have shown that *Jubilees* is concerned with the purity of Jews, and the book takes this

<sup>78</sup> As regards the other abstentions, mentions of sexual immorality appear explicitly in *Jub.* 7.20-21, and perhaps euphemistically in Ham’s act of seeing his father naked in 7.8. And while idolatry is not explicitly mentioned in *Jubilees* 6-7, it appears implicitly with the announcement that demons have begun their seductions in *Jub.* 7.27 because demon worship is directly connected with idolatry in *Jub.* 1.11 and 22.17-18. See Hanneken, “Moses Has His Interpreters”, 689. Cf. A.Y. REED, “Enochic and Mosaic Traditions in Jubilees. The Evidence of Angelology and Demonology”, *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah. The Evidence of Jubilees* (eds. G. BOCCACCINI – G. IBBA) (Grand Rapids, MI 2009) 353-368.

<sup>79</sup> See HANNEKEN, “Moses Has His Interpreters”, 686-687.

<sup>80</sup> There are no extant manuscripts of this book, but other sources, such as 1QapGen 5.29 and *T. Levi* attest to its existence and affirm the claims in *Jub.* 1.29, 33.16 and 50.13 that Noah and Moses taught the same law. See T.R. HANNEKEN, *The Subversion of the Apocalypses in the Book of Jubilees* (Early Judaism and Its Literature 34; Atlanta, GA 2012) 288-289.

as far as promoting a Jewish separationist stance towards Gentiles <sup>81</sup>. Herein lies the significance of the use of the Noahide laws in the Apostolic Decree: rather than being used to promote a Jewish separationist ideology, they are used instead to promote the integration of Jewish and Gentile Christians. The contextualized meaning of the abstentions recognizes the legitimacy of Jewish values of purity, while combatting other Jewish views in the culture that would prompt Jewish Christians to withdraw from multi-ethnic churches. This dimension of the decree, however, is only recoverable through knowledge of Jewish texts and cultural values of the first century. Codex Bezae seemingly misses these contextual aspects of the Apostolic Decree, however, and thus adjusts the abstentions to make them less specific to the needs of multi-ethnic Christian communities. The more likely reason for this is that later Christian communities were not characterized by the same conflicts as the original Lukan audience, and it may well be that the Jewish background of the Apostolic Decree was unknown to the editor of the Bezan text.

Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger do not observe the relevance of the Noahide laws for the Apostolic Decree. They instead see a Jewish perspective manifested in the Apostolic Decree with the presence of the negative Golden Rule:

The Jewish perspective of Codex Bezae is confirmed by the summary James adds to his list of essential requirements, for the formula that he uses corresponds to the traditional Jewish summary of the law for a proselyte (Tob. 4.15; Sir. 31.15) [...] The absence in the Alexandrian text of the Jewish summary of the Law for Gentiles is further evidence that the text of James' speech has been adapted to a Christian, rather than a Jewish, context <sup>82</sup>.

This explanation makes claims that are problematic when the supporting texts that are cited are examined. The context of Tob 4,15 is the message of a Jewish father nearing death, who instructs his son, Tobias, on how he wants him to live his life, which includes taking care of his mother, marrying within his tribe, being charitable to the poor, and the like, as Tobit nears his death (Tob 4,1-19). The text does not reflect any formulaic sayings and is not directed towards Gentiles nor does it have Gentiles in

<sup>81</sup> See L. DOERING, "Purity and Impurity in the Book of Jubilees", *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah. The Evidence of Jubilees* (eds. G. BOCCACCINI – G. IBBA) (Grand Rapids, MI 2009) 261-275, who states in regard to *Jub.* 22.16-18, that the message "is a *comprehensive* call for the separation from the nations, entailing prohibitions against eating with them, behaving as they do, and becoming their companion [...] While one of the concerns is idolatry, 'eating' with Gentiles may include dietary and perhaps 'ritual' issues" (272).

<sup>82</sup> RIUS-CAMPS – READ-HEIMERDINGER, *Message of Acts*, III, 214.

mind, other than to prohibit Tobit from marrying one. It thus makes little sense why Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger reference this text as support. The reference to Sir 31,15 is also perplexing, first because it does not contain the language of the negative Golden Rule, and second because it is the middle-part of a discussion on table etiquette, which, if anything, would serve as a better reference to those supporting the Alexandrian tradition that emphasizes a closer link between the Apostolic Decree and Peter's vision prior to his encounter with Cornelius, which called old distinctions between clean and unclean into question. In fact, the very next verse reads, "Eat what is set before you like a well brought-up person" (Sir 31,16) (NRSV). Neither of these references support the view that James's summary consists of a Jewish perspective. The better explanation, then, as demonstrated above, is that the list of items in the Alexandrian tradition reflects a much more Jewish-oriented text.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The consideration of external evidence and internal criticism, coupled with a reconsideration of the background text of the Apostolic Decree, calls into question Read-Heimerdinger's main argument that the Bezan text is earlier and more Jewish-minded than the Alexandrian witness. Where Read-Heimerdinger's argument lends its support to a moral understanding of the Apostolic Decree, her analysis is questionable for several reasons. It involves moving directly from the word and word-group levels to the level of context. Moreover, the long-accepted internal criteria used in the discipline of textual criticism contradict her conclusions. In addition, the Alexandrian text reflects a more Jewish-oriented set of abstinences that is lost in the Bezan text, and the negative Golden Rule does not confirm a Jewish perspective as Read-Heimerdinger and her colleague Rius-Camps state.

What does this say, then, about the role discourse analysis should play in the discipline of textual criticism? The appropriate place for discourse analysis in textual criticism should be in a supportive role rather than a constitutive role for making text-critical decisions, especially when the goal is to argue for a large-scale thesis, such as that found in Read-Heimerdinger's study<sup>83</sup>. This article has demonstrated that the selective use of discourse

<sup>83</sup> This is consonant with Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland's basic rule: "Internal criteria (the context of the passage, its style and vocabulary, the theological environment of the author, etc.) can never be the sole basis for a critical decision, especially in opposition to external evidence" (*Text of the New Testament*, 280).

analysis tools can be used to support highly objectionable conclusions. This does not speak to the problems of the linguistic tools themselves, but rather to how they are used in the hands of an analyst.

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#### SUMMARY

This article assesses Jenny Read-Heimerdinger's application of discourse analysis to the problem of the two textual traditions of the book of Acts. Based on an analysis of the textual variants of the Apostolic Decree and a consideration of Jewish perspective of both traditions, this article concludes, contrary to Read-Heimerdinger, that the Alexandrian tradition is more likely to represent the original text and contains a more Jewish-oriented perspective, which calls her application of discourse analysis into question and reaffirms the primacy of the Alexandrian text.



## THE ORACLE OF REBEKAH: AN AMBIGUOUS ETIOLOGY

### I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars generally recognize that deliberate literary ambiguity is employed in the Hebrew Bible, although the scholarly commitment to disambiguation might cause an underestimation of its prevalence and variety. In what follows, I would like to identify a new type of this phenomenon: the ambiguous etiology. This kind of etiology is designed to account for a complex or changing reality by embodying its contradictory aspects in the same statement. The ambiguous etiology is thus a relative of the better recognized ambiguous oracle; and, indeed, the example that I shall present to illustrate the type is also an oracle. However, typically, in an ambiguous oracle, only one possible meaning ends up being true, but it is unknown in advance which meaning that will be. In an ambiguous etiology, all possible meanings end up being true.

The section of the book of Genesis that recounts “the lineage of Isaac son of Abraham” (Gen 25,19 – 35,29) begins with the conception and birth of Isaac’s two sons, Esau and Jacob, the progenitors of the neighboring nations, Edom and Israel. The Yahwistic narrative commences with the statement that, after an initial period of barrenness, Isaac’s wife Rebekah becomes pregnant (25,21). When the children jostle each other within her, Rebekah goes “to inquire of YHWH” (לדרש את ה', v. 22), i.e. to consult an oracle<sup>1</sup>. The response she receives is recorded in the next verse (v. 23):

And YHWH said to her,	יאמר ה' לה
“Two nations are in your belly,	שני גוים בבטןך
And two populaces shall diverge from inside you;	ושני לאמים ממעיך יפרדו
But populace shall be mightier than populace,	ולאם מלאם יאמץ
And the greater the younger shall serve”.	ורב יעבד צעיר

The first two clauses of the oracle establish that the jostling was a sign that the children within her are nascently two separate, and thus competing, nations. The third clause breaks the symmetry, establishing that one of the two will be stronger than the other, and inviting the question of which one that will be. The key clause is the final one, which seems intended

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Sam 9,9; 28,7; 1 Kgs 14,5; 22,5-8; 2 Kgs 1,2-16; 3,11; 8,8; 22,13-18; Jer 21,2; 37,7.

to answer the question. However, the answer is complicated by the fact that this three-word clause contains no less than four independent forms of ambiguity. It reads **וְרַב יַעֲבֹד צָעִיר**, which is translated above as “and the greater the younger shall serve”. These ambiguities are played upon in the continuation of the Yahwistic narrative.

## II. SYNTACTIC AMBIGUITY

The first ambiguity is syntactic. The clause lacks the accusative case indicator **אֶת** <sup>2</sup>. This is striking, because the presence of the word would have given the whole oracle a symmetrical 3–4–3–4 meter. Indeed, troubled by the metric irregularity of the oracle, Kittel suggested without manuscript evidence that in the second clause the word **יִפְרְדּוּ** (“shall diverge”) should be deleted <sup>3</sup>, while Gunkel proposed deleting **וּשְׁנֵי** (“and two”) <sup>4</sup>. Kraft has shown that Kittel’s emendation may also have been carried out in antiquity <sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, the fourth clause’s word order is exceptional. As opposed to the previous two clauses, in which the order is noun–noun–verb (the first clause is nominal and has no verb), the order of this clause is noun–verb–noun <sup>6</sup>. In Biblical Hebrew, the subject usually precedes the object; however, the order object–verb–subject still occurs “frequently”, whereas the order object–subject–verb occurs “very rarely” <sup>7</sup>. Thus, even without the case indicator, a mere continuation of the previous word order, noun–noun–verb, would have sufficed to make this clause syntactically clear: the reader would have been entitled to assume that the first noun is the subject and the second noun is the object. With the actual word order, noun–verb–noun, the reader cannot assume that.

Because of the absence of the case indicator combined with the exceptional word order, we do not know which word of this clause is the subject and which word is the direct object: will the **רַב** (“greater”) serve the **צָעִיר** (“younger”), or vice versa? The latter possibility certainly accords better with the way of the world. But the former possibility accords with the

<sup>2</sup> While the accusative case indicator is “somewhat rare in poetry” (GKC §117*a-b*), it is found in Yahwistic poetry elsewhere in Genesis (3,18; 4,11,12; 27,40).

<sup>3</sup> *BHK* ad loc.

<sup>4</sup> H. GUNKEL, *Genesis* (trans. M.E. BIDDLE; Macon, GA 1997) 289.

<sup>5</sup> R.A. KRAFT, “A Note on the Oracle of Rebecca (Gen. xxv. 23)”, *JTS* 13 (1962) 318–320.

<sup>6</sup> The purpose of the change in word order may be to signal the end of the oracle; see A. MIRSKY, *The Hebrew Style of Punctuation* (Jerusalem 1978; Hebrew) 11–35.

<sup>7</sup> GKC §142*f*; see also Joüon §155*o*.

biblical trope of the lesser person or group counter-intuitively achieving mastery, as operative in the stories of Gideon (Judg 6,15), Saul (1 Sam 9,21), and David (1 Sam 16,11; 17,14; Mic 5,1)<sup>8</sup>.

This ambiguity was observed by only a handful of medieval Jewish commentators<sup>9</sup> and modern scholars<sup>10</sup>, having gone unnoticed in virtually all modern commentaries and English Bible translations<sup>11</sup>. It resembles the ambiguity in the Delphic oracle to Pyrrhus according to the Latin writer Ennius: *Aio te Aeacida Romanos vincere posse*, “I say that you, Aeacus’ descendant, the Romans can defeat”<sup>12</sup>.

Admittedly, the order subject–verb–object is more common than object–verb–subject in Biblical Hebrew, thus giving more weight to the possibility that the **רַב** will serve the **צֶעִיר**<sup>13</sup>. As if to counterbalance this fact, the episode of Isaac’s blessing (Genesis 27) in the continuation of the Yahwistic narrative strengthens the opposite possibility, by identifying the one destined to be served as the one destined to possess **רַב**, an “abundance” of ripe grain and sweet wine (vv. 28-29).

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., F.E. GREENSPAHN, *When Brothers Dwell Together*. The Preeminence of Younger Siblings in the Hebrew Bible (New York 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Except when otherwise stated, medieval and later rabbinic comments herein are on Gen 25,23 and are taken from <http://mg.alhatorah.org/> (Hebrew; accessed 2019-07-07). See David Kimhi, in M. COHEN (ed.), *Mikra’ot Gedolot ‘Haketer’*. Genesis, Part II (Ramat Gan 1999; Hebrew) 5, citing Job 14,19 and Isa 64,1; Jacob b. Asher (long commentary) and Joseph ibn Kaspi; Isaac Abrabanel, in Y. SHAVIV (ed.), *The Commentary of Abrabanel on the Torah*. Genesis (Jerusalem 2006/7; Hebrew) 529. Cf. the comment of R. Huna in Genesis Rabbah 63:7.

<sup>10</sup> A. SHAPIRA, “Jacob and Esau: A Polyvalent Reading (The Ambiguous Reading of the Biblical Text)”, *Studies in Bible and Exegesis* 4 (1997) 249-282, here 260-262 (Hebrew); R.E. FRIEDMAN, *Commentary on the Torah*. With a New English Translation (San Francisco, CA 2001) 88, citing D.N. FREEDMAN; R.C. HEARD, *Dynamics of Diselection*. Ambiguity in Genesis 12–36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah (SemeiaSt 39; Atlanta, GA 2001) 97-101; D. SYLVA, “The Blessing of a Wounded Patriarch: Genesis 27.1-40”, *JSOT* 32/3 (2008) 267-286, here 277; B.A. ANDERSON, *Brotherhood and Inheritance*. A Canonical Reading of the Esau and Edom Traditions (LHBOTS 556; New York 2011) 25-26; B. HENSEL, *Die Vertauschung des Erstgeburtssegens in der Genesis*. Eine Analyse der narrativ-theologischen Grundstruktur des ersten Buches der Tora (BZAW 423; Berlin 2011) 142-143; Y. ZAKOVITCH, *Jacob*. Unexpected Patriarch (Or Yehuda 2012; Hebrew) 22; R.E. ADELMAN, *The Female Ruse*. Women’s Deception and Divine Sanction in the Hebrew Bible (HBM 74; Sheffield 2015) 20-21. Cf. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin; Y. KIEL, *The Book of Genesis* (3 vols.; Da’at Miqra; Jerusalem 2000; Hebrew) 2:225.

<sup>11</sup> While in Biblical Hebrew the order noun–verb–noun is ambiguous and the order noun–noun–verb is unambiguous, in English the reverse is true. Thus, the English translations that copy the word order here fail to preserve the ambiguity, whereas the translation given above, which does not copy the Hebrew word order, preserves the ambiguity.

<sup>12</sup> Cicero, *De divinatione*, 2.56.116; J. FONTENROSE, *The Delphic Oracle*. Its Responses and Operations with a Catalogue of Responses (Berkeley, CA – Los Angeles, CA 1978) cat. Q230 (pp. 343-344). See also T.A. PERRY, “Cain’s Sin in Gen. 4:1-7: Oracular Ambiguity and How to Avoid It”, *Proof* 25 (2005) 258-275, here 262-263.

<sup>13</sup> See David Kimhi.

## III. LEXICAL AMBIGUITY

There is also lexical ambiguity in our clause. Nearly all readers of the verse interpret רב here as “elder” and צעיר as “younger”<sup>14</sup>. However, nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible does רב mean “elder” in the comparative sense, and it almost never refers to age at all. The single exception is Job 32,9, and even there it seems that the adjacent term רב שנים (“multitude of years”, v. 7) is necessary to cue the reader that age is in view. The word צעיר (f. צעירה) does often mean “younger” or “youngest”, but then it is only ever contrasted with בכור (f. בכירה) (Gen 19,31-38; 29,26; 43,33; 48,14; Josh 6,26; 1 Kgs 16,34).

Indeed, nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible are the roots רב/רבה and צער directly contrasted with each other<sup>15</sup>. The jarring juxtaposition of רב and צעיר lends strangeness to the clause and prompts the attentive reader to contemplate the meanings of the words, now and when reading the continuation of the narrative. The former term, which is by far the more common of the two, ordinarily means “numerous” or “plentiful”, priming the reader to keep track of which child acquires more followers and descendants. The latter term can, as noted above, mean “younger”, causing the reader to take note of each child’s position in the family. But it can also refer to lack of social and political power (1 Sam 9,21; Isa 60,22; Mic 5,1; Pss 68,28; 119,141), making us pay attention to aspects of wealth and prosperity as well<sup>16</sup>.

In its lexical ambiguity, the clause resembles, for example, the Delphic oracle promising Tisamenus that he would win ἀγῶνας [...] μεγίστους [...] πέντε, “five great contests”. The word ἀγών can refer to contests of a sporting, military, or legal nature. Tisamenus thought that the oracle referred to sports, but it turned out to be about war<sup>17</sup>.

## IV. PRAGMATIC AMBIGUITY

The clause is also pragmatically ambiguous. For whichever way the words רב and צעיר are interpreted, each one can refer to either Esau or Jacob. If

<sup>14</sup> An exception is ANDERSON (*Brotherhood*, 25, 32), who states that the terms can also be rendered as “greater” and “lesser”.

<sup>15</sup> They are indirectly contrasted in Jer 30,19; see also Deut 32,2. The Akkadian cognates *rabû* and *šihru* are contrasted with each other and can refer to an elder and younger son respectively, but the semantic ranges of these words differ from those of their Hebrew counterparts. See E.A. SPEISER, *Genesis*. Introduction, Translation, and Notes (AB; New Haven, CT – London 1964) 194-195; CAD 14:26-50; 16:179-185.

<sup>16</sup> In one instance in very late Biblical Hebrew, צעיר means “not massive” (Dan 8,9), presumably influenced by the Biblical Aramaic word נעיר (Dan 7,8).

<sup>17</sup> Herodotus, *Histories*, 9.33.2; FONTENROSE, *Delphic Oracle*, cat. Q160 (p. 321).

they refer to age, then we can understand Esau as the greater one, because, as the Yahwistic narrative repeatedly emphasizes, he is the biological first-born and Jacob is the second-born (Gen 25,25; 27,1.15.19.32.42). However, we can also understand the reverse, since Jacob becomes the legal firstborn (Gen 25,33; 27,36).

If the words pertain to wealth and power, then we might understand Esau as the greater one, since the continuation of the Yahwistic narrative takes pains to have him describe his possessions as רַב ("enough", Gen 33,9). However, Jacob, too, has by then caused Laban's wealth to reach רַב ("abundance", Gen 30,30), and his own flocks are רַבּוֹת ("numerous", Gen 30,43).

Finally, if the words refer to population size, the greater one can still be either Esau, who has "four hundred men with him" (Gen 32,7; 33,1), or Jacob, who becomes "two camps" (Gen 32,11) and who has received a promise from YHWH that his offspring would be uncountable for רַב ("multitude", Gen 32,13; cf. 28,14)<sup>18</sup>.

The question of who is great and who is small continues to be taken up in the biblical literature. The people descended from Jacob are described as רַב ("numerous") by both Joseph (Gen 50,20) and Pharaoh (Exod 1,9). Moses, too, says that the Israelites are like the stars of heaven for רַב ("multitude") both at the beginning of the wilderness period (Deut 1,10) and at its end (Deut 10,22). At the same time, however, he tells the Israelites that YHWH's love for them is not due to רַבְּכֶם ("your multitude"), as they are in fact הַמְעַט ("the fewest") of all peoples (Deut 7,7). Much later, YHWH says he has made Edom קָטָן ("small") among the nations (Jer 49,15 ≈ Obad 1,2).

Pragmatic ambiguity such as that identified here is quite common in Delphic oracles. A good example is the promise to Croesus, King of Lydia, that if he sent an army against the Persians he would destroy μεγάλην ἀρχήν, "a great empire". While Croesus believed that the great empire would be his enemy Persia, it turned out to be his own Lydia<sup>19</sup>.

## V. FURTHER LEXICAL AMBIGUITY

It is the nature of oracles that they must sometimes be interpreted in non-intuitive ways. For example, Croesus the King of Lydia, mentioned

<sup>18</sup> Hayyim ibn Attar ("Or Hahayyim") maintains that neither רַב nor צַעִיר refers to Esau or Jacob in particular; both terms refer to either one at different times.

<sup>19</sup> Herodotus, *Histories* 1.53.3, 86.1, 91.4; Cicero, *De divinatione* 2.56.115; FONTENROSE, *Delphic Oracle*, cat. Q100 (p. 302).

above, was told by the oracle at Delphi that his reign would endure until the Medes would have ἡμίονος, “a mule”, as king. He believed, correctly, that a mule would never be king of the Medes and inferred that his dynasty would last forever. However, it turned out that in this instance, uniquely, the word ἡμίονος referred to a human of mixed ethnic ancestry <sup>20</sup>.

Thus, the reader of Rebekah’s oracle must also consider possible interpretations of the words in its key clause which stray from their usual meanings <sup>21</sup>. In this context it is significant that both רב and צעיר have professional denotations. The former occasionally means “archer” (Jer 50,29; Job 16,13; Prov 26,10; possibly Jer 16,16; Ps 55,19; see also Gen 21,20; 49,23; Ps 18,15) <sup>22</sup>, while the latter occasionally means something like “shepherd boy” (Jer 49,20; 14,3 Q [צעור K]; 48,4 Q [צעור K]; Zech 13,7 cj. <sup>23</sup> [צער]) <sup>24</sup>. Thus, the clause can also be read, “And the archer the shepherd boy shall serve”. Unlike the more common meanings discussed above, here there is no pragmatic ambiguity. The archer would clearly be Esau, who is depicted explicitly as an archer in the episode of Isaac’s blessing (Gen 27,3) and is characterized as a hunter from the beginning (Gen 25,27). The shepherd boy would clearly be Jacob, who is depicted in the episode of Isaac’s blessing as the one who handles the flocks (Gen 27,9), who is characterized from the beginning as a “tent dweller” (Gen 25,27; see 4,20), and whose career path is precisely that of a shepherd boy (Gen 29,10; 30,29-43).

Moreover, רב can be read as רב, a *qal* participle from the root ריב, meaning “one who strives or contends” (Isa 19,20 MT [יירד 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>]; 45,9; Jer 51,36). The word צעיר, for its part, can easily be read as a variant of שער, “hairy”. In Mishnaic Hebrew, צעיר occurs with this meaning (Mekilta of R. Ishmael on Exod 12,40 = y. Megillah 1:8 = b. Megillah 9b) <sup>25</sup>. And the alternation of צ with ש occurs, for example, in the name of the

<sup>20</sup> Herodotus, *Histories* 1.55-56.1, 91.5; FONTENROSE, *Delphic Oracle*, cat. Q101 (p. 302).

<sup>21</sup> And yet, the reading by several medieval Jewish commentators of רב here as an adverb meaning “for a long time” seems untenable, since the clause would then refer only to one party and would thus be a non sequitur; see Hezekiah b. Manoah, Minhag Yehuda, Da’at Zeqenim, and Jacob b. Asher (long commentary).

<sup>22</sup> See HALOT, s.v. III רב, II רבב, II רבה; H.-J. FABRY – E. BLUM – H. RINGGREN, “*rah*; *rah* II; *rôb/rôb*; *râbah* I; *râbah*; *râbâ*; *ribbô/ribbô*; *rîbîm*; *arbeh*; *marbeh*; *marbî*; *tarbî*”, TDOT 13:272-298, here 276.

<sup>23</sup> BHS ad loc.

<sup>24</sup> See E. BEN YEHUDA, *A Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew* (Jerusalem 1980; Hebrew) 11:5576; S.E. LOEWENSTAMM, “The Nouns צעור, צעור (Ketib) / צעיר (Qerê)”, *Tarbiz* 36 (1966/7) 110-115 (Hebrew); M. SÆBØ, “*šā’îr*; *šā’ar*; *miš’âr*; *še’îrâ*”, TDOT 12:424-428, here 425.

<sup>25</sup> See BEN YEHUDA, *Complete Dictionary*, 11:5566.

brothers' own father, who is usually named יִצְחָק (e.g., Gen 25,19-21) but is occasionally named יִשְׁחָק (Jer 33,26; Amos 7,9.16; Ps 105,9) <sup>26</sup>. Thus, our clause can be read, "And the striver the hirsute shall serve". In these senses, the former term would clearly refer to Jacob, who is born clutching at his brother's heel and who is named after this action (Gen 25,26) <sup>27</sup>. The latter term would refer to Esau, who is said to emerge from the womb in the same birth event resembling שְׂעָר אֲדָרֶת, "a fur coat" (v. 25), who is later described as אִישׁ שְׂעָר, "a hairy man" (27,11), and whose arms are described as שְׂעָרֶת "hairy" (27,23). These descriptions play on שְׂעִיר, one of Esau's ethnonyms (e.g., Gen 32,4; 33,14.16; 36:8.9) <sup>28</sup>. The name שְׂעִיר seems actually to appear once in the Bible as צִעִיר (2 Kgs 8,21).

## VI. DRAWING OUT THE AMBIGUITIES

One might think that by the end of the episode of Isaac's blessing (Genesis 27), it has already been resolved that it is Esau who will serve Jacob. After all, the blessing given to Jacob explicitly promises him יַעֲבֹדְךָ, "you will be served" (Gen 27,29; see also 27,37), and the blessing given to Esau explicitly promises him וְאַתָּה אַחֶיךָ תַעֲבֹד, "you will serve your brother" (Gen 27,40).

However, it is by no means clear that the story really presumes what most readers believe it to presume and what it has Esau believe to be true (Gen 27,34.36.38), namely that the beneficiary of the blessing is the one who is physically present at its conferral, regardless of the intent of the conferrer <sup>29</sup>. Isaac certainly intended for Esau to be served and for Jacob to serve, and even in terms of wording, the one designated to be

<sup>26</sup> See C. COHEN, "The Law of Dissimilation of Emphatics in Akkadian (Geers' Law) and its Ramifications for Biblical Hebrew Lexicography", *Hebrew through the Ages*. In Memory of Shoshanna Bahat (ed. M. BAR-ASHER) (Studies in Language 2; Jerusalem 1997; Hebrew) 29-45, here 38-39.

<sup>27</sup> According to a passage usually attributed to the Elohist source, Jacob's place in the world would be defined when וִירָב ("he contended") with Laban (Gen 31,36).

<sup>28</sup> The similarity between שְׂעִיר/שְׂעִיר and צִעִיר is noted by some modern scholars: G.J. WENHAM, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC 2; Dallas, TX 1994) 176; V.P. HAMILTON, *The Book of Genesis*. Chapters 18-50 (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI 1995) 177; HEARD, *Dynamics*, 101; ANDERSON, *Brotherhood*, 25; HENSEL, *Vertauschung*, 143.

<sup>29</sup> Nowhere does the text suggest that Rebekah even had in mind originally that Jacob should pose as Esau and "steal" the blessing intended for him. Rather, she simply observed that Isaac was disposed to bless whoever brought him delicacies, and she urged Jacob to do so in order to get a blessing — perhaps instead of Esau, perhaps in addition to him (vv. 5-10). However, Jacob, true to his character in these narratives, assumes that fraud was her plan (vv. 11-12), and Rebekah ultimately acts according to his understanding (vv. 15-16).



served is that son who smells like a field (v. 27), namely Esau <sup>30</sup>. Isaac's reluctance to give Esau a second blessing (vv. 36-40), which is presumably the blessing he would have given to Jacob as the second son, may be due to his own puzzlement as to what the outcome of blessing under these conditions will be. Esau's plan to kill Jacob (v. 41) reveals that even he does not consider it a sure thing that he will serve Jacob. Thus, the episode extends the ambiguities of Rebekah's oracle by leaving unresolved the question of which blessing will actually apply to which son.

When the brothers reunite, Jacob's conciliatory efforts include imploring Esau to accept his gifts with the words *קח נא את ברכתי*, literally "please take my blessing" (Gen 33,11), precisely mirroring Esau's previous cry, *והנה עתה לקח ברכתי*, "and now he's taken my blessing!" (Gen 27,36). By prostrating himself and his family before Esau on that occasion (Gen 33,3.6.7), Jacob gives his brother the honor that Isaac bequeathed to the favored son (Gen 27,29). And by calling himself Esau's *עבד* ("servant") five times (Gen 32,5.19.21; 33,5.14), Jacob displays an attempt not only to decide the effects of Isaac's pronouncements, but also to resolve the ambiguities of Rebekah's oracle, in Esau's favor.

## VII. FUNCTION OF THE AMBIGUITIES

Together with a recognition of kinship, there existed exceptionally bitter hatred between Israel and Edom (Ezek 25,12; 35,5; Amos 1,11; Deut 23,8-9).<sup>31</sup> In the consciousness of the biblical authors, the power relationship between these two nations had exactly the continually oscillating character that an etiology saturated with ambiguity would aptly express.

In early times, Edom was mightier: it organized itself into a kingdom before Israel ever did (Gen 36,31 = 1 Chr 1,43), and Israel was no match for it in a potential conflict (Num 20,14-21; Judg 11,17). Once Israel did appoint a king, though, it prevailed over the Edomites, who were bested by Saul (1 Sam 14,47) and David (1 Kgs 11,15-16; Ps 60,2) and became *עבדים*, literally "servants", of the latter (2 Sam 8,14; 1 Chr 18,12-13). This situation continued until the time of King Jehoshaphat of Judah

<sup>30</sup> The supposed acknowledgment by Isaac concerning the one who was physically present at the first blessing that *גַּם בְּרִיךְ יְהוָה* ("he will indeed be blessed", v. 33), is the product of a textual error. The segment should be emended to *גַּם בְּרִיךְ יְהוָה*: "[...] and I blessed him] indeed. Now when [Esau heard ...]"; see F. HITZIG, *Begriff der Kritik*. Am Alten Testamente praktisch erörtert (Heidelberg 1831) 125-128.

<sup>31</sup> See E. ASSIS, *Identity in Conflict*. The Struggle Between Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel (Winona Lake, IN 2016).



(1 Kgs 22,48; 2 Kgs 3,9). However, during the reign of his son Jehoram, Edom successfully revolted and possibly annexed some Judahite-populated territory into its realm (2 Kgs 8,20-22 = 2 Chr 21,8-10). Jehoram's great-grandson Amaziah defeated Edom in battle (2 Kgs 14,7.10 ≈ 2 Chr 25,11-12.14.19). The tide turned again at the destruction of Judah by the Chaldeans, when the Edomites seized the opportunity to kill, destroy, loot, and hunt bounty (Joel 4,19; Obad 1,11-14; Ps 137,7). These vicissitudes caused the biblical authors to look forward with passion to the eventual downfall of Edom and the victory of Israel (Num 24,18; Isa 11,14; 34; Jer 49,7-22; Ezek 25,12-14; 35; Amos 1,12; 9,12; Mal 1,1-5; Lam 4,21-22).

### VIII. CODA

The Esther story, ritualized in the holiday of Purim, alludes unmistakably to the Yahwistic narrative of Esau and Jacob in Genesis (cf. Est 4,1 with Gen 27,34). It continues the theme of the Jacob-Esau seesaw with a conflict between Mordecai the Judahite (Est 2,5; 3,4; etc.), the descendant of Jacob, and Haman the Agagite (Est 3,1.10; 8,3), the descendant of Esau (1 Samuel 15; Gen 36,12 ≈ 1 Chr 1,36). Haman is blessed with a רב ("multitude") of sons (Est 5,11) who are later killed, while Mordecai's brethren, whom Haman had threatened to kill, become the enduring רב at the end (Est 10,3). The strange talmudic story of the amora Rabbah slaughtering his friend R. Zeira during their Purim feast (b. Megillah 7b) may have to be seen as yet another variation on this theme, if it is to be explicable at all. Rabbah's name, רבה, literally "the great one", is the Aramaic equivalent of רב, and Zeira's name, זעירא, an abbreviation of זעירא, literally "the small one", is the Aramaic equivalent of צעיר.

By this time, Jewish thought was identifying Edom with Rome. The amora R. Nahman b. Isaac deduced from the third clause of Rebekah's oracle that at any given time either Roman Caesarea must be in ruins and Jerusalem be intact, or the other way around (b. Megillah 6a). This identification morphed into a Jewish identification of Esau with Christendom, even while many Christians were seeing Jewry as the elder Esau serving themselves as the younger Jacob<sup>32</sup>. Thus, the Oracle of Rebekah and its

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Caesarius of Arles, Sermon 86.3, in M. SHERIDAN (ed.), *Genesis 12–50* (ACCS; Downers Grove, IL 2002) 148. See further G.D. COHEN, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought", *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (ed. A. ALTMANN) (Cambridge, MA 1967) 19-48; I.J. YUVAL, *Two Nations in Your Womb. Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (trans. B. HARSHAV – J. CHIPMAN; Berkeley, CA 2006) 10-20; S. CHERRY – M. LOCKSHIN, "Esau: III. Judaism", and B. MCGINN,

affiliated biblical passages not only expressed a historic ethnic rivalry in the biblical period, but also served as the roots of a conceptual enmity that thrived through repeated mutation for some two millennia. This enmity seems to be drawing to a close in today's era of widespread fraternity between Christians and Jews, embodied not least in the productive collegiality of biblical scholars.

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#### SUMMARY

This paper seeks to identify a new type of deliberate literary ambiguity in the Hebrew Bible: the ambiguous etiology, which is an etiology designed to account for a complex or changing reality by embodying its contradictory aspects in the same statement. The example given to illustrate this type is the Yahwistic Oracle of Rebekah (Gen 25,23), which is clearly an etiology for the relations between Israel and Edom. The final, key clause of this oracle seems to predict which nation will subjugate the other. It is argued that the prediction is complicated by the clause's containing four independent forms of ambiguity, which are drawn out in the continuation of the Yahwistic narrative. The oracle thus accounts for the continually oscillating power relationship between the two nations.

"Esau: IV. Christianity", *EBR* 7:1143-1149; R. NAIWELD, "The Use of Rabbinic Traditions about Rome in the Babylonian Talmud", *RHR* 233 (2016) 255-285; ASSIS, *Identity*, 175-187; K. BERTHELOT, "The Paradoxical Similarities between the Jews and the Roman Other", *Perceiving the Other in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (eds. M. BAR-ASHER SIEGAL – W. GRÜNSTÄUDL – M. THIESSEN) (WUNT 394; Tübingen 2017) 95-109.

## BABYLONIAN HISTORIOGRAPHIC TRADITION IN THE BOOK OF KINGS

The debate concerning the redaction of the Book of Kings shows no sign of abating despite the apparent wide acceptance of many of the theses formulated by Martin Noth over the decades. One of the points still much discussed concerns the possibility of determining, and eventually dating, the sources of the Deuteronomistic layer of the Book of Kings. Many scholars are confident that it is possible to identify one or more pre-Deuteronomistic redactional strata within the book, dating back to Josiah's or even to Hezekiah's reign. However, there are two clues that suggest adopting a more cautious view in dating these layers of the Book of Kings to the neo-Assyrian period. The first two parts of this paper recall how the comparison between the introductory and concluding summaries of the Book of Kings and the Mesopotamian Chronicles received opposite interpretations regarding the dating of the pre-Deuteronomistic layer of 1-2 Kings. The third part argues that, along with some stylistic and formal similarities between the Babylonian Chronicle ABC 1 and the formulaic chronological summaries of 1-2 Kings, there are also two specific pieces of evidence which suggest the presence of a late Babylonian historiographic tradition in two biblical passages that are often considered pre-Deuteronomistic and dated to the neo-Assyrian period.

### I. THE FORMULAIC CHRONOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF 1-2 KINGS

According to one of Noth's theses, the Deuteronomist may have composed the introductory and concluding summaries of the various kings of Israel and Judah during the exile, extracting and reworking some historical information from the sources at his disposal. Among these sources, the "Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah/Israel", regularly quoted in such summaries, would have given the Deuteronomist various materials on which to base his general chronological framework <sup>1</sup>.

This thesis was later rejected from two opposing perspectives. On the one hand, some scholars claimed that the Deuteronomist was not the first to compose a literary work based on the aforementioned Chronicles.

<sup>1</sup> M. NOTH, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I* (Halle 1943) 72-74.

Therefore, they posited the existence of a synchronic historical composition predating the Deuteronomist's work and containing the main events in the two kingdoms. According to many exegetes, this pre-Deuteronomistic composition was written either during Josiah's or, according to others, already during Hezekiah's reign <sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, there has been no shortage of scholars who, while embracing the Deuteronomistic nature of the introductory and concluding summaries, have speculated that the references to the "Chronicles of Kings of Judah/Israel" could be a literary *topos* designed by the Deuteronomist to lend more credibility to his historical reconstruction <sup>3</sup>.

Although it is impossible to determine with certainty the extent or perhaps even the existence of the "Books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah/Israel", in my opinion the well attested practice of writing chronicles and king-lists in various Ancient Near Eastern kingdoms <sup>4</sup> may be considered an argument for the probable existence of the aforementioned "Chronicles" cited in 1-2 Kings.

If this were the case, then, for the debate concerning the redaction of the Book of Kings, it would be relevant to determine whether the stereotypical information deriving from these "Chronicles" shows any influence of the Assyrian historiographical tradition or of the later Babylonian one.

## II. COMPARISONS WITH THE MESOPOTAMIAN CHRONICLES

The comparison between the formulaic chronological frameworks of 1-2 Kings and the Mesopotamian chronographic texts is a task that has been performed many times by scholars in recent decades <sup>5</sup>. It is well known

<sup>2</sup> See A. JEPSEN, *Die Quellen des Königsbuches* (Halle <sup>2</sup>1956) 30, 38; and, more recently, K.-P. ADAM, "Warfare and Treaty Formulas in the Background of Kings", *Soundings in Kings. Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Scholarship* (eds. M. LEUCHTER – K.-P. ADAM) (Minneapolis, MN 2010) 35-68; C. LEVIN, "Das synchronistische Exzerpt aus den Annalen der Könige von Israel und Juda", *VT* 61 (2011) 616-628; B.D. THOMAS, *Hezekiah and the Compositional History of the Book of Kings* (FAT 2.63; Tübingen 2014).

<sup>3</sup> See G. GARBINI, "Le fonti citate nel 'Libro dei Re'", *Henoch* 3 (1981) 26-46, and, with different considerations, K.M. STOTT, *Why Did They Write This Way? Reflections on References to Written Documents in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Literature* (LHB/OTS 492; New York 2008) 52-60.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the Mesopotamian Chronicles (see below), one should consider also the ancient Egyptian king-lists, the (deified) king-list of Ugarit, and the lists of the kings of Tyre mentioned by Josephus who quotes from Menander of Ephesus (*Ant.* 8.144-149).

<sup>5</sup> In addition to biblical commentaries and the works cited in note 2, see J. VAN SETERS, *In Search of History. Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, CT – London 1983) 79-92, 292-302; N. NA'AMAN, "The Sources Available for the Author of the Book of Kings", *Recenti tendenze nella ricostruzione della*

that keeping up-to-date dynastic king-lists was customary in Assyria and Babylonia. Some of these king-lists, which reported the names of kings from the foundation of the kingdom, were regularly updated to include the current sovereigns. In addition to such lists of kings, the Mesopotamian scribes also wrote chronicles listing the most important events of each regnal year. These Mesopotamian chronicles <sup>6</sup> are not uniform texts, nor is their scope limited to events contemporary with the time of compilation; rather, they reflect historical data which was readily available according to the perspectives and interests of those who had commissioned them. It is important to remember that this historiographic tradition lasted for a very long time, considering that many Babylonian chronicles were copied and even updated until Hellenistic times.

Those chronographic Mesopotamian texts that report synchronic dynastic sequences for the Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms are particularly relevant when it comes to a comparison of style with 1-2 Kings. These synchronistic Mesopotamian historiographical texts can be attributed roughly to two chronologically distinct groups: those of the Assyrian tradition dating back to Assurbanipal's kingdom, or shortly thereafter <sup>7</sup>, and those of the Babylonian tradition, known mainly from Persian or Late Babylonian sources <sup>8</sup>. The closeness of the biblical text to one rather than the other tradition has created substantially divergent theses about the redaction of 1-2 Kings, as illustrated by the recent studies of Felipe Bianco Wißmann and Benjamin D. Thomas <sup>9</sup>.

*storia antica d'Israele* (ed. M. LIVERANI) (Roma 2005) 105-120; L.L. GRABBE, "Mighty Oaks from (Genetically Manipulated?) Acorns Grow: *The Chronicle of the Kings of Judah* as a Source of the Deuteronomistic History", *Reflection and Refraction. Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (eds. R. REZETKO – T.H. LIM – W.B. AUCKE) (VT.S 113; Leiden 2007) 155-173; F.B. WİBMAN, «*Er Tat Das Rechte...*». Beurteilungskriterien und Deuteronomismus in 1Kön 12 – 2Kön 25 (ATHANT 93; Zürich 2008) 36-37; M. LIVERANI, "The Book of Kings and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography", *The Books of Kings. Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception* (eds. A. LEMAIRE – B. HALPERN) (VT.S 129; Leiden 2010) 163-184.

<sup>6</sup> See the editions of the texts in ABC = A.K. GRAYSON, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, NY 1975); MC = J.J. GLASSNER, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (SBL.WAW 19; Atlanta, GA 2004) and the remarkable observations of C. WAERZEGGERS, "The Babylonian Chronicles: Classification and Provenance", *JNES* 71 (2012) 285-298.

<sup>7</sup> I refer, for example, to the *Synchronistic King List* (see A.K. GRAYSON, "Königslisten und Chroniken. B. Akkadisch", §3.12, *RIA* VI, 87-135, here 116-125) which records the Assyrian and Babylonian rulers in two parallel columns, or to the *Assyrian Synchronistic Chronicle* ABC 21 = CM 10 which, with a clear Assyrian bias, records the history of the relations between Babylon and Assyria and their boundary conflicts from Pazur-Aššur III to Adad-nerari III.

<sup>8</sup> I refer especially to the Babylonian Chronicle ABC 1 = MC 16-17 which records the parallel histories of Babylonia, supported by Elam, and Assyria.

<sup>9</sup> While WİBMAN, «*Er Tat Das Rechte...*», claims that the synchronisms of Kings were produced following the model of the Neo-Babylonian chronicle series, and that

### III. ASSYRIAN OR BABYLONIAN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION?

I do not intend here to offer a new comparison between these two Mesopotamian chronographic traditions and 1-2 Kings. The focus of this paper is rather specifically oriented toward a single issue: aside from comparisons of literary style, is it possible to identify other, clearer elements connecting the biblical text to either one historiographical tradition or the other? In other words, since the literary, stylistic and ideological comparison between 1-2 Kings and the Mesopotamian chronographic texts has often resulted in divergent conclusions, is it possible to identify more compelling clues that would allow one to prove with more confidence whether biblical historical information relates to Assyrian or to Babylonian tradition?

In my opinion, besides the striking stylistic and formal similarity of the Babylonian Chronicle ABC 1 = MC 16-17<sup>10</sup> to the various chronological elements within the introductory and concluding summaries of 1-2 Kings, there are two additional clues which suggest the biblical tradition's greater affinity with the Babylonian rather than the Neo-Assyrian historiographic tradition.

Both clues are well known in the academic world, although they have not had any impact on the debate concerning the redactional history of the Book of Kings.

#### 1. *The Fall of Samaria*

The first clue comes precisely from the aforementioned Babylonian Chronicles ABC 1 = MC 16. In fact, both the Bible (2 Kings 17,5-6; 18,9-10) and the Chronicles ABC 1 (col. I,27-28: "In the month of Tebeth, the 25th day, Shalmaneser ascended the throne of Assyria [and Akkad]. He ravaged Samaria.") attribute the fall of Samaria to Shalmaneser V. For the Babylonian Chronicle, the destruction of Samaria must have been one of

consequently the whole of 1 Samuel – 2 Kings originated in the Neo-Babylonian or early Persian period. THOMAS, *Hezekiah*, maintains, differently, that a short form of the Book of Kings was complete already in the time of King Hezekiah. For arguments opposing Thomas's hypothesis, see N. NA'AMAN, "Was an Early Edition of the Book of Kings Composed during Hezekiah's Reign?", *SJOT* 31 (2017) 80-91.

<sup>10</sup> It is the only Neo-Babylonian chronicle known in more than one copy. The text is preserved in three copies dated to the Late Babylonian or Persian period (the best-preserved exemplar was copied in the twenty-second year of Darius I, i.e. 500-499 B.C.E.). This chronicle presents the chronological information of the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon according to a fairly standardized structure, sometimes close to the format of the introductory and concluding summaries of 1-2 Kings.

the major events of Shalmaneser's reign, as no other deed is ascribed to him in this Chronicle. By contrast, if we consider the Assyrian historiographical texts, we find that, in many of his royal inscriptions, Sargon II presents himself as the one who "besieged and conquered Samaria"<sup>11</sup>. It is true that Sargon's claim to be the conqueror of Samaria appears only in his later inscriptions, so that it is probable that he did not really achieve any military victory against Samaria in his first regnal year. On the other hand, if the biblical account reflected a well-established Assyrian tradition, then Sargon's propagandistic claim to be the conqueror of Samaria could not be ignored by the biblical author. It should be emphasized that, for our study, determining the identity of the real conqueror of Samaria is as irrelevant as knowing exactly what happened<sup>12</sup>. This study has the sole purpose of trying to detect, within the historical accounts in annalistic style of 1-2 Kings, the presence of a typical late Babylonian historiographic tradition which diverges from the Assyrian one.

After these considerations, we should re-evaluate the widespread opinion that considers 2 Kings 17,5-6 and 18,9-11 as derived from an ancient pre-Deuteronomist source dating back to the Neo-Assyrian period. Alternatively, a better option for those intending to preserve a hypothetical pre-Deuteronomistic layer of 1-2 Kings would be to consider the whole of 2 Kings 18,9-12 (including the subsequent theological commentary) as a late post-exilic editorial addendum<sup>13</sup> to the supposed pre-Deuteronomistic text, despite the difficult consequence of having also to attribute 17,5-6 to the same late literary layer.

## 2. *Pûl, King of Assur*

The second clue suggesting a probable influence of the late Babylonian historical tradition on the biblical text is the use of the name Pûl to refer to the Assyrian King Tiglat-pileser III in 2 Kings 15,19. In fact, the use of the hypocoristic Pûlu (in its orthographic variations) instead of the usual Assyrian form, Tukultî-apil-Ešarra, is documented exclusively in the

<sup>11</sup> See E. FRAHM, "Samaria, Hamath, and Assyria's Conquests in the Levant in the Late 720s BCE. The Testimony of Sargon II's Inscriptions", *The Last Days of the Kingdom of Israel* (eds. S. HASEGAWA – C. LEVIN – K. RADNER) (BZAW 511; Berlin 2019) 55-86.

<sup>12</sup> On historical issues, see HASEGAWA – LEVIN – RADNER, *The Last Days*, with many older references.

<sup>13</sup> A path taken, for example, by L. CAMP, *Hiskija und Hiskijabild*. Analyse und Interpretation von 2 Kön 18-20 (MThA 9; Altenberge 1990) 92-95.

Late-Babylonian cuneiform sources, or in even later ones. In the current state of research, the short form of Pū(u) is documented in the Babylonian Kings List A, col. IV,8<sup>14</sup>, in the Hellenistic Ptolemaic Canon<sup>15</sup>, and in Berossus (frg. n. 5)<sup>16</sup>. Additionally, the same short orthography is documented in 1 Chr 5,26 and in Flavius Josephus (*Ant.* 9.232), although these last two witnesses probably relied on 2 Kings 15,19.

When we consider that all the Assyrian as well as the old Aramaic inscriptions<sup>17</sup> dating back to the Neo-Assyrian period present only the long form of the name, the hypocoristic form Pū in 2 Kings 15,19 can be justified only if we relate this biblical text to a post-exilic Babylonian historiographic tradition rather than to a Neo-Assyrian one<sup>18</sup>. Although this does not imply that the author of 2 Kings 15,19 has drawn his historical information directly from Babylonian sources, it shows that the biblical author was familiar with a prosopography typical of the Babylonian tradition. Such orthography, therefore, contradicts the hypothesis that 2 Kings 15,19 can be attributed to a Neo-Assyrian layer of the Book of Kings.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Determining the redaction history of the Book of Kings is a central question among scholars since Martin Noth. This brief article makes no claim to solve all the issues regarding this topic. Its only purpose is to suggest the existence of a Babylonian cultural milieu serving as the *terminus post quem* for some biblical passages widely considered pre-Deuteronomistic, as, for example, 2 Kings 15,19; 17,5-6; 18,9-11. This

<sup>14</sup> Edition: A.K. GRAYSON, "Königslisten und Chroniken B. Akkadisch", *RIA* VI (1982), 90-96, here 93; see also J. NOVOTNY in <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/kinglists/kinglista/> (accessed 08/07/2019).

<sup>15</sup> Edition: GRAYSON, "Königslisten", 101 §3.8; see also J. NOVOTNY, in <http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/ribo/kinglists/ptolemaiccanon/> (accessed 08/07/2019).

<sup>16</sup> F. JACOBY, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker (F Gr Hist)*, III C (Leiden 1958) 385.

<sup>17</sup> See the long spellings *tgltpslr*, *tgltplysr* or *tkltplsr* in the inscriptions KAI 215,13.15-16; 216,3.6; 217,1-2; 233,15.

<sup>18</sup> As already pointed out by O. LORETZ – W. MAYER, "Pūlu-Tiglatpileser III. und Menahem von Israel nach assyrischen Quellen und 2 Kön 15,19-20", *UF* 22 (1990) 221-231, here 229: "Die „anachronistische“ Erwählung Pūlus in 2 Kön 15,19-20 erklärt sich am besten aus der Annahme, daß der oder die Schreiber der Königsbücher in Babylonien Zugang zu dortigen Überlieferungen über Tiglatpileser III. – Pūlu hatten". If this Babylonian influence is not accepted, it has to be concluded that 2 Kgs 15,19 was influenced by a still later Hellenistic historiographical tradition.



post-exilic Babylonian cultural milieu should be carefully considered before attempting to reconstruct a hypothetical pre-exilic redaction of the Book of Kings.

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#### SUMMARY

The redactional history of the Book of Kings is a complex and very disputed issue. Many recent studies offer interesting comparisons between the introductory and concluding summaries of 1-2 Kings and the Mesopotamian Chronicles, but their results are divergent. With no claim at solving the many issues of the redactional history of the Book of Kings, this article suggests the existence of two clues — i.e. the attribution of the fall of Samaria to Shalmaneser V and the use of the hypocoristic form Pûl for Tiglat-pileser III — that allow us to connect some historical information given in Kings with a late Babylonian tradition rather than with an earlier Neo-Assyrian one.

PASSOVER AS “PASSION”:  
A FOLK ETYMOLOGY IN LUKE 22,15

The account of the celebration of Jesus’ last Passover with his disciples is common to all three synoptic Gospels, which share very close verbal, syntactical, and narrative parallels in their versions of the preparation for, and participation in, the Passover meal (Matt 26,17-30; Mark 14,12-26; Luke 22,7-23). One saying of Jesus, however, is unique to the Gospel of Luke (22,15):

καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα τοῦτο τὸ Πάσχα φαγεῖν μεθ’ ὑμῶν πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν.

And he said to them, “I desired with desire to eat this *Passover* [meal/lamb] with you before my *suffering*”.

There is a remarkable wordplay in this verse that has apparently escaped the notice of all commentators from antiquity to the present day: Jesus’ assertion that he longed to eat the Πάσχα (“Passover lamb”) with his disciples before his own παθεῖν (“suffering”). Perhaps the reason that the wordplay has escaped the notice of commentators is that the homophony is not superficially apparent: Luke uses the aorist infinitive παθεῖν (*pathein* “to suffer”) rather than the present infinitive πάσχειν (*paschein* “to suffer”). But the wordplay would not have escaped the notice of at least some of Luke’s Greek-speaking audience, both because of the close juxtaposition of the homophones, and, as we shall see, because of a contemporary debate regarding the etymology of the name of the Jewish festival.

It should not surprise us to find Luke engaging in etymological wordplay on proper names. I do not mean the simple translation of a name’s meaning, such as Hakeldamach “field of blood”, Tabitha “gazelle”, and Elymas “magician”. Nor do I mean the conspicuous use of significant names, such as Theophilus “loved by god”, Lydia “the Lydian”, and Eutychus “lucky”. I mean rather a more subtle and sophisticated type of etymological wordplay that reinforces important leitmotifs that run through the narrative of Luke-Acts. This type of etymological wordplay manifests itself several times in Luke’s treatment of proper names: the personal names Barnabas, Barjesus, and Jesus; the place name Gaza; and — the one that is examined extensively here — the festival name *Pascha* (“Passover”).

In the first instance, Luke introduces Joseph, who has been given by the apostles the significant name Barnabas (presumably from the Hebrew verb *naba* “to prophesy”), by offering the Greek translation of his name as υἱὸς παρακλήσεως (“son of exhortation”, Acts 4,36). Luke later capitalizes on this folk etymology by describing Barnabas as the one who “exhorted” (παρακάλει) the believers in Antioch (Acts 11,22-24). Luke again draws on the folk etymology in his account of the missionary efforts in Cyprus (Acts 13,6-12) by juxtaposing the name of Barnabas (“son of exhortation”) with that of the false prophet Barjesus (“son of Jesus/Joshua” = “son of ὙΗΩΗ is salvation”), which Paul turns on its head by addressing him as υἱὲ διαβόλου (“son of a devil”) <sup>1</sup>. Luke also appears to folk-etymologize the Hebrew name Yeshua/Joshua, which is a shortened form of Yehoshua, a theophoric name probably derived originally from *Yehol Yahu* “ὙΗΩΗ” and the noun *shua* “a cry for help”, and therefore meaning “ὙΗΩΗ is a saving cry”, or, more loosely, “cry to ὙΗΩΗ when in need of help” <sup>2</sup>. By juxtaposing the Greek transliteration of Jesus’ name, Ἰησοῦς, with homophonic forms of the Greek words for “healing” (ἰασις) and “to heal” (infinitive ἰῆσθαι), Luke emphasizes the association between “Jesus” and his various acts of “healing” (Luke 9,42; 14,3-4; 22,51; Acts 4,30; 9,34; 17,18). In his story about the meeting of the apostle Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch on the road to Gaza (Acts 8,26-39), Luke appears to insert himself into a current etymological debate over whether the name of the city of Gaza (Γάζα) was derived from Hebrew *’az* “strong” or Persian *ganj* “treasure”. By juxtaposing the name of the city Gaza (Γάζα) with the rare Persian word for treasure (γάζα) Luke seems to be favoring the latter, and thereby highlights the irony that this powerful official, who oversees the royal “treasure” of the queen of Ethiopia, and who is now traveling to the city of “Treasure”, is eagerly in search of a different kind of “treasure”: one of a spiritual nature.

Lastly, in the primary etymological wordplay under consideration here (Luke 22,15), Luke offers a unique saying of Jesus to his disciples that he desires to eat the “Passover” (Πάσχα) before he has “to suffer” (πάσχω). There is, of course, no real etymological relationship between these two words. Πάσχα (“Passover festival”) and πάσχω (“suffer”) are not cognates; they are not even of the same language. This never presented

<sup>1</sup> Negation of an adversary’s name is a literary device as old as Homer: Hector renames his brother Paris Δύσπαρις “Ill-omened Paris” (*Iliad* 3.39; 13.769); Penelope renames the city Ilion Κακοίλιον “Evil Ilion” (*Odyssey* 19.260, 597; 23.19); an unnamed suitor renames the beggar Iros Ἄιρος “Un-Iros” (*Odyssey* 18.73). Such a negation, in effect an “un-naming”, asserts the speaker’s power and control over an adversary.

<sup>2</sup> For linguistic analysis, see M. NOTH, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart 1928) 101-110, 154-155.

an obstacle to the folk-etymologizing of proper names, however, either in the Hebrew or Greek literary traditions; in fact, such "bilingual etymologizing" is widespread in antiquity<sup>3</sup>. Πάσχω ("suffer") is a native Greek word. The present tense form πάσχω is formed with the iterative/inchoative suffix -σκω attached to the root παθ- (i.e., παθ-σκω). This root παθ- is widespread in all periods of the Greek language and is perhaps of Indo-European origin (there are possible parallels in Irish and Lithuanian). Πάσχα ("Passover"), on the other hand, is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew noun *pesah* "the Passover festival", which is related to the verb *p-s-h* "to pass over". The first attestation of the noun form in the Old Testament is in Exod 12,11, where the origin of the festival is described, and in this passage a wordplay with the verb form is made three times: 12,13 *pāsahtî* "I will pass over"; 12,23 *wûpāsaḥ* "he will pass over"; and, most explicitly, 12,27 *pāsaḥ* "he passed over". The Septuagint translation into Greek loses the force of the wordplay entirely: 12,13 σκεπάσω "I will protect"; 12,23 παρελεύσεται "he will pass by"; 12,27 ἐσκέπασε "he protected"<sup>4</sup>.

This Hebrew origin of the Greek transliteration Πάσχα ("Passover festival") is clearly embraced by some early Jewish exegetes. Josephus translates the term into Greek as ὑπερβάσια "a passing over", and he limits his exegesis to the events narrated in Exodus 12: the "passing over" of the angel of death when God spared the Hebrews from the plague that was descending upon the Egyptians<sup>5</sup>. Philo translates the term into Greek

<sup>3</sup> Gen 11,9 etymologizes the non-Semitic toponym *Babel* with Hebrew *balal* "confused". Exod 2,10 associates the Egyptian name *Mosheh*, from *mesu* "son", with the Hebrew word *māšāh*, because the pharaoh's daughter "drew" him out of the water. Similarly, Odysseus' non-Greek name is not actually related to the verb ὀδύρομαι "to grieve" (Homer, *Odyssey* 1.55-62), nor is Achilles' non-Greek patronymic Peleides related to the verb πάλλω "to wield" (Homer, *Iliad* 16.140-144), nor are the non-Greek Titans related to the verb τιταίνω "to strain" or the noun τίσις "retribution" (Hesiod, *Theogony* 207-210). Closer to Luke's own time we may compare the Jewish philosopher Philo and the Greek biographer and essayist Plutarch, who occasionally try to elucidate non-Greek names by means of Greek etymologies: e.g., *Leah*, from λείος "smooth" (Philo, *Leges allegoriae* 2.59); *Osiris*, from a combination of ὅσιος "holy" and ἱερός "sacred" (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride* 375D-E).

<sup>4</sup> C.H. TOY, "The Meaning of *Pesah*", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 16 (1897) 178-179, argues for the meaning "leap" or "dance" (as, perhaps, in 1 Kgs 18,26), a ritual action associated with an old nomadic Hebrew spring festival. S.E. LOEWENSTAMM, *The Evolution of the Exodus Tradition* (trans. B.J. SCHWARTZ; Jerusalem 1992) 184-185, 207, argues for the meaning "protect" (as, perhaps, in Isa 31,5), finding the origin of the festival in a very ancient apotropaic ritual eventually incorporated into the Exodus narrative. While these proposals that the term had its origin in ancient ritual are interesting from a historical perspective, they have little bearing on the argument under consideration here, since the understanding of the term as "pass over" is apparent already in Exodus 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Antiquities* 2.313: "Whence still now do we sacrifice in like manner, calling this festival the Passover (Πάσχα), and it signifies the passing over (ὑπερβάσια), because

as διαβατήρια or διάβασις (“a passing through, a passage”), and he extends its meaning to apply literally to the passage of the Hebrews from Egypt, as related in Exodus, and symbolically as a prefiguring of the passage of the human soul from the world of perception to the world of reason <sup>6</sup>.

Many later Christian exegetes followed suit. Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 2.11.51) follows Philo’s exegesis closely, but he Christianizes the context by adding that Christ made this “passage” (διάβασις) in his resurrection, enabling Christians eventually to make the same “passage”. Origen of Alexandria begins his *De Pascha* with an argument for the true etymology of Πάσχα (“Passover”), asserting that it is from the Hebrew word פֶּסַח “a passage” (διάβασις, elsewhere ὑπέρβασις). Origen’s theology of the Passover is based, then, on the story in Exodus 12 as a historical event: the *passage* of the Jews from Egypt to Canaan. But, as he illustrates at the end of his treatise, he understands the Passover spiritually as well, as a symbol of Christ’s *passage* to the Father in his resurrection, and, by extension, of the *passage* of those who believe in Christ from the realm of the physical to the realm of the spiritual <sup>7</sup>. The Church Fathers of the Latin West also understood Πάσχα (“Passover”) as a “passage” and translated it into Latin as *transitus*, a meaning that could be extended to the “passage” of Christ, as well as that of Christ’s followers, from death to life <sup>8</sup>. And this is the way the word is translated in the Latin *Vulgate* in Exod 12,11 (*est enim Phase [id est, transitus] Domini*) and 12,27 (*victima transitus Domini est, quando transivit super domos filiorum Israel in Aegypto*) <sup>9</sup>.

It is clear, then, that in the saying attributed to Jesus in Luke 22,15 Luke is introducing a wordplay based solely on the phonetic similarity of Πάσχα and πάσχω, not on any real etymological connection between the two words. That is to say, Luke is introducing a folk etymology into his account of the Passion of Jesus. A loose English translation that would capture

on that day God, having passed over (ὑπερβάς) them, caused the plague to descend upon the Egyptians”.

<sup>6</sup> *De specialibus legibus* 2.145-147; *De migratione Abrahami* 25; *De congressu eruditionis gratia* 106; *De sacrificiis Abelis et Caini* 63; *Leges allegoriae* 3.94, 154, 165; *Quaestiones in Exodum* 1.4.

<sup>7</sup> Similarly Gregory Nazianzen (*In sanctum Pascha*, Oratio 45); Apollinaris, Bishop of Laodicea (*In Matthaeum* fr. 130); Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentarii in Lucam* 141); Theodoret of Cyrrhus (*Quaestiones in Octateuchum* XXIV).

<sup>8</sup> So Ambrose (*De Cain et Abel* 1.8.31; *De sacramentis* 1.4); Augustine (*Tractatus in Evangelium Iohannis* 55.1; *In Psalmos* 68.2, 120.6, 138.8, etc.).

<sup>9</sup> C. MOHRMANN, “Pascha, Passio, Transitus”, *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 66 (1952) 37-52, surveys the etymologies proposed by ancient Christian (some Jewish) writers for the word *Pascha*, along with the repercussions for the theological understanding and celebration of Easter in antiquity (and the rites of Eucharist and Baptism). She does not mention the wordplay on *Pascha* in Luke 22,15.

the wordplay by suggesting an analogous folk etymology is: "I wished to observe the *Passover* before my *Passion*". Though the two English words are partly homophonous, there is no etymological connection between them: "Passover" is derived from the perfect passive participial form of Latin *pando* "stretch out", while "Passion" is derived from the perfect passive participial form of Latin *patior* "suffer".

Πάσχα ("Passover") occurs numerous times in the New Testament, but Luke 22,15 is the only passage in which a connection with the Greek verb πάσχω ("suffer") is ventured. As we have noted, the passage, and therefore of course the wordplay between Πάσχα ("Passover") and πάσχω ("suffer"), is unique to the Gospel of Luke. This should not be unexpected: Luke is the most Hellenized of the Gospel writers, and he seems to be writing primarily to a Greek-speaking audience, beginning with Theophilus, whose name is Greek (Luke 1,3; Acts 1,1). And, of course, the wordplay works only in Greek, and moreover only for someone who would recognize that παθεῖν "to suffer" is the aorist form of πάσχειν "to suffer". Clearly, Luke 22,15 is not an attempt to convey Jesus' actual words to his twelve Jewish disciples in the upper room; it is Luke's own addition, in his own words, to his source material.

All this is congruous with Luke's general presentation of the festival of Passover to his audience. Matthew and Mark introduce Πάσχα without comment (Matt 26,2 and 26,17-19; Mark 14,1 and 14,12-16), ostensibly because their audiences needed no explanation. Luke, in contrast, makes an effort to introduce and explain the Jewish festival to his audience, even though his explanations reveal some confusion on his part. Luke conflates what were at that time two separate festivals: "the festival of unleavened bread" and "the one called the Passover" (Luke 22,1). In Luke's account, "the day of unleavened bread" is identified with the day "on which it was necessary to sacrifice the Passover (lamb)" (Luke 22,7). However, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb actually took place the evening before the festival of unleavened bread began. Luke's explanations of the meaning of the Passover culminate in his folk-etymological wordplay: "I longed to eat the Πάσχα ("Passover lamb") with you before my own suffering (πρὸ τοῦ με παθεῖν)" (Luke 22,15). Although there is no real etymological relationship between the two words, Luke's wordplay gives us insight into his own thinking.

This is where the real force of the folk etymology comes into play: it associates the Passover lamb with Jesus himself, the new "Passover lamb" by virtue of his suffering. At 22,7 Luke uses the phrase θύεσθαι τὸ Πάσχα, literally "to sacrifice the Passover", thereby foregrounding the image of the Passover lamb; here at 22,15 the presence of the lamb also seems to

be the central feature, with the wordplay emphasizing that Jesus, through his “suffering” (παθεῖν), becomes the new “Passover lamb” (Πάσχα), through whose suffering salvation is offered to all. This understanding of Jesus as a sacrificial lamb, and particularly as a Passover lamb, is sometimes thought to be a fairly late Christological development, as it occurs most explicitly in the later books of the New Testament: the Gospel of John (1,29.36); 1 Peter 1,19; Revelation (5,12 and some thirty more times). But in fact this association is made, though perhaps more subtly, throughout the New Testament. Most notoriously, the passion of Jesus is said to coincide with the Passover in all four Gospels: in the synoptic Gospels the first day of Passover coincides with the last supper, while Jesus’ crucifixion occurs the next day; in the Gospel of John the first day of Passover coincides exactly with Jesus’ crucifixion. Admittedly, the metaphor of Jesus as the Passover lamb is especially strong in the Gospel of John, which is framed by this motif: Jesus is introduced with the title “Lamb of God” (John 1,29.36), and the fact that Jesus’ legs were not broken at his crucifixion is interpreted as a fulfillment of the stipulation regarding the Passover lamb in Exodus (John 19,36; cf. Exod 12,46). However, it should be noted that John the Evangelist puts the identification of Jesus as “Lamb of God” in the mouth of John the Baptist, already in the earliest period of Jesus’ ministry. And though the connection of Jesus with the Passover lamb is not a centerpiece of Pauline theology, Paul does make the connection explicitly at 1 Cor 5,6-8: καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός (“for our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed”). Finally, the metaphor of Jesus as a sacrificial lamb, though not explicitly as a Passover lamb, occurs in Luke’s other work, namely in his account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8,32-35). The eunuch has been reading without comprehension from the book of Isaiah about the coming of the servant of the Lord, who will arrive like a lamb being led to the slaughter (Acts 8,32-33 ≈ Is 53,7-8); Philip explains to the eunuch that this is a prophecy about Jesus (Acts 8,35). Nowhere other than in Luke 22,15, however, is the association of Jesus with the Passover lamb made through a folk etymology, and so subtly — too subtly, perhaps, since apparently no commentator on Luke has noticed it for two thousand years.

It appears, then, that Luke’s wordplay, which consists of juxtaposing and thereby associating Πάσχα (“Passover festival”) and πάσχω (“suffering”), is a contribution to a movement already underway at this early period to reinterpret the Jewish Passover through a Christian lens: to substitute the *suffering* Christ for the Passover lamb, the *Passion* for the *Passover*. The seeds for this association appear to have already taken root



in the pre-Christian period in the exegesis of the Jewish philosopher Philo. As we have already observed, Philo clearly understood the Hebrew noun *pesah* (“the Passover festival”) and its Greek transliteration Πάσχα to mean διάβασις “a passage” — in the original sense of the *passage* of God over the Hebrews during the plague in Egypt, and, by extension, the *passage* of the Hebrews from Egypt to Canaan, and by further allegorizing, the *passage* of the soul from the world of perception to the world of reason. But Philo also appears to have associated Πάσχα (“Passover”), though much less explicitly, with the Greek verb πάσχω (“suffer”), as is most evident in some complex wordplay found in his treatise *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit* 192: “The Passover (Πάσχα) is when the soul trains to unlearn irrational suffering (πάθος), and it willingly suffers (πάσχει) well-reasoned suffering (εὐπάθειαν)”. That is to say, Philo asserts the allegorical significance of Πάσχα (“Passover”) by using three forms of the Greek root πάσχ-/πάθ- (“suffer”), all in very short order. It appears, then, that this association was being made already in the pre-Christian period, in this case in Alexandria in the early first century CE.

Early Christian exegetes were quick to embrace this false etymology and to extend its implications even further. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, wrote a treatise on the Passover sometime between 165-170 CE. While the existence of such a work has been known for some time (Eusebius mentions the title Περὶ τοῦ Πάσχα), the text of Melito’s treatise, based on a fourth-century papyrus codex, supplemented by later Greek, Coptic, and Syriac excerpts, was not edited and published until 1940<sup>10</sup>. Melito uses the supposed etymological connection between Πάσχα (“Passover”) and πάσχω (“suffer”) to justify the Christian celebration of the Passion of Christ on the same day as the Jewish Passover: “What is the Passover (Πάσχα)? Its name is derived from the event — i.e., the verb “to observe the Passover” (πάσχειν) is from the verb “to suffer” (παθεῖν). Therefore, learn who the sufferer (ὁ πάσχων) is and who he is who suffers along with (συμπαθῶν) the sufferer (πάσχοντι)”<sup>11</sup>.

It was also around the mid-twentieth century that the hitherto unknown treatise on the Passover by the Alexandrian Church Father Origen came to light. It was written around 245 CE but was unknown to modernity until an accidental discovery in 1941, when the British army was clearing rubble from a cave at Tura, twelve kilometers south of Cairo, to make room

<sup>10</sup> C. BONNER, *The Homily on the Passion by Melito Bishop of Sardis* (Philadelphia, PA 1940).

<sup>11</sup> This is the form of the text as reconstructed by O. PERLER, *Méliton de Sardes: Sur la Pâque (et fragments)* (Paris 1966) lines 326-331.



for the storage of munitions. A codex of Origen's treatise on the Passover was found in the rubble, in poor condition and with many lacunae, but it was not edited and published until 1979<sup>12</sup>. Origen opens his treatise with a scathing criticism of what he regards as an erroneous view, followed by "most of the brothers, indeed perhaps all", that the word Πάσχα ("Passover") takes its name from the Greek word πάθος ("suffering") and refers to the suffering of Christ. Origen attempts to correct this error by pointing out that Πάσχα ("Passover") is from the Hebrew word פֶּסַח "a passing over" (διάβασις, elsewhere ὑπέρβασις)<sup>13</sup>. Origen's misguided "brothers" seem to include Melito (above), but he was probably also thinking of several other early Christian exegetes: Apollinaris, Bishop of Hierapolis from around 161-180 CE, who wrote a refutation of Melito's correspondence of the Christian and Jewish festivals but still embraced the supposed etymological connection between Πάσχα ("Passover") and πάσχω ("suffer") and saw in the Jewish Passover a prefiguring of the Passion of Christ<sup>14</sup>; Heracleon the Gnostic, writing around 175 CE, who claimed that the festival of Passover "was a 'type' (τύπος) of the suffering of the Savior"<sup>15</sup>; and Hippolytus of Rome (died ca. 235 CE), who wrote a treatise on the Passover, known from an adaptation in the form of a homily by a later writer, in which he appears to have embraced the supposed etymological connection between Πάσχα ("Passover") and πάσχω ("suffer"): ὁ Χριστὸς . . . τὸ δὲ Πάσχα οὐκ ἔφαγεν ἀλλὰ ἔπαθεν, "Christ did not eat the Passover but rather suffered it"<sup>16</sup>.

The false etymology remained influential even after Origen's harsh criticism. The late fourth-century Archbishop of Constantinople, Gregory Nazianzen, criticizes "some" who make a connection between Πάσχα and πάσχω, thereby "Hellenizing" a word that actually has an origin in Hebrew Φάσκα, which means "passage" (διάβασις) (*In sanctum Pascha*, Oratio 45). Nevertheless, some twenty years later, Gregory's successor, John Chrysostom, asserts the false etymology with a rhetorical flourish and traces the connection back to the "suffering" of the Egyptians at the death of their first-born sons (*In sanctum Pascha* 11): Αἰγύπτῳ μὲν οὖν τὸ πάθος ἐν πληγῇ, τῷ δὲ Ἰσραὴλ τὸ Πάσχα ἐν ἑορτῇ, διὸ καὶ ὀνομάζεται ἑορτὴ Πάσχα Κυρίου ("For Egypt there was Pathos in the plague; for

<sup>12</sup> O. GUÉRAUD – P. NAUTIN, *Origène: Sur la Pâque* (Paris 1979).

<sup>13</sup> We may compare Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.22: τὸ Πάσχα, ὅπερ ἐρμηνεύεται διαβατήρια, "the Pascha, which is translated 'passage.'"

<sup>14</sup> Cited in a later Byzantine *Paschal Chronicle* (*Patrologia Graeca* 92, 80C-81A).

<sup>15</sup> According to Origen, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 10.117-118.

<sup>16</sup> Text in P. NAUTIN, *Homélies Pascales I. Une homélie inspirée du traité sur la pâque d'Hippolyte* (Paris 1950) 175.

Israel there was Pascha in the festival; wherefore the festival is named the Pascha of the Lord")<sup>17</sup>.

The false etymology also appeared in the Latin West, in the equation of Πάσχα and *Passio*. The early Christian apologist from Carthage, Tertullian (c. 160-240 CE), alludes to this association in his *Adversus Iudaeos* 10.18: "He [Moses] added that it is the Passover (*Pascha*) of the Lord, that is the suffering (*Passio*) of Christ". His contemporary, Irenaeus, Bishop of Lugdunum, makes the association more explicit in *Adversus haereses* 4.10.1: "And he [Moses] was not ignorant of the day of his [Christ's] suffering (*Passio*); but he foretold him, in a figurative manner, by naming it [the festival] the Passover (*Pascha*); and at that very (festival), which had been foretold such a long time ago by Moses, our Lord suffered (*passus est*), thus fulfilling the Passover (*Pascha*)". The Christian rhetorician Lactantius (c. 250-325 CE) explicitly articulates the false etymological associations between Hebrew *Pascha*, Greek πάσχω, and Latin *passio* in *De divinis institutionibus* 4.26.40: "The slaying of the lamb by those who themselves perform it is called the Passover (*Pascha*), from the [Greek] word to suffer (πάσχειν), because it is a figure of the suffering (*Passio*)"<sup>18</sup>.

In sum, as remarkable as it may seem, it appears that in juxtaposing the Hebrew proper noun Πάσχα ("Passover") and the Greek verb πάσχω ("suffer"), as he does in his Gospel (Luke 22,15), Luke inserts himself into an etymological debate that had begun already well before his time about the true meaning of the name of the Passover festival. As we have observed, this is not just a wordplay for the sake of wordplay. Rather, the folk etymology is introduced to assert a deeper meaning and broader extension of the Hebrew Passover lamb: i.e., to confess that Jesus is the new Passover lamb (Πάσχα) through whose suffering (πάσχω) salvation is offered to all.

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<sup>17</sup> I translate here in a manner intended to capture the parallel construction of the sentence, which highlights the relationship between the words πάθος and Πάσχα.

<sup>18</sup> Later Church Fathers continue to invoke this etymology, both in agreement and disagreement. *Tractatus IX* of "pseudo-Origin", attributed by some to Gregory, the late fourth-century bishop of Elvira, includes several passages that make the etymological connection. Augustine, on the other hand, expresses disagreement with those who regard "Pascha" as derived from the Greek word "to suffer" (πάσχειν): *Tractatus in Evangelium Iohannis* 55.1; *In Psalmos* 120.6; *In Psalmos* 68.2. Augustine, as mentioned above, translates *pascha* as *transitus*, drawing its meaning from Hebrew.

## SUMMARY

Great significance is attached to the etymologies of proper names in the Hebrew Scriptures, in the Greek New Testament, and in ancient Greek and Latin literature generally. The author of Luke-Acts embraces this literary tradition, offering several subtle and sophisticated etymological wordplays on proper names for persons and places: Barnabas, Barjesus, Jesus, and Gaza. One that has been entirely overlooked is his etymological wordplay on the Hebrew festival name *Pascha* (“Pass-over”), which he associates with the Greek verb *pascho* (“to suffer”). This is not just a casual wordplay introduced as a literary device; rather, this etymological wordplay reinforces an important leitmotif that runs through the entirety of Luke-Acts: that Jesus is the new Passover lamb (Πάσχα) through whose suffering (πάσχω) salvation is offered to all.

# RECENSIONES

## Vetus Testamentum

Konrad SCHMID, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Neue Theologische Grundrisse). Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2019. xvii-414 p. 15.5 × 23. € 79,00

In diesem Buch sammelt K. Schmid eine Reihe von bibeltheologischen Vorarbeiten, ergänzt sie mit neuem Material und präsentiert so eine reichhaltige, umfassende Zusammenschau dessen, was der erste Teil der Bibel zu Gott zu sagen hat. Dass er selber es im Vorwort (VI) als „Skizze“ und „Entwurf“ bezeichnet, stellt angesichts des Gebotenen eine Untertreibung dar. Ihm ist ein Anliegen, theologische Profile dieser Schriften unter mehreren Rücksichten zu beschreiben, als „literarisch geformt, historisch differenziert“ und „literatursoziologisch“ geprägt (7-8). „Theologie“ will er dabei in einem eingeschränkten Sinn verstehen, als „reflexive und synthetisierende Anstrengungen“ bezüglich des Redens über Gott (VIII).

Schmids Arbeit gliedert sich in neun Kapitel mit 42 Paragraphen; Stellen- und Sachregister runden sie ab. Das erste Kapitel, „Einführung“, problematisiert die Fragestellung (1-12) und schließt mit der Bemerkung, im Anschluss an Stephen A. Geller, das Alte Testament sei das „Zeugnis einer *literarischen* Religion, die so nie gelebt worden ist“.

Das zweite Kapitel, „Der Theologiebegriff in Anwendung auf die Bibel“, deckt sich inhaltlich weitgehend mit Schmids Buch *Gibt es Theologie im Alten Testament?* Zum Theologiebegriff in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft (Theologische Studien 7; Zürich 2013). Darin gibt er einen informierten Überblick über die Wandlungen dessen, was im Lauf der Geschichte unter „Theologie“ verstanden worden ist. Dabei gelangt er zum Schluss: „Denn das Alte Testament *enthält zwar keine Theologie*, es enthält aber gleichzeitig *auch nicht einfach keine Theologie*“, und löst dieses Paradox mit der Unterscheidung von „impliziter“ und „expliziter Theologie“ auf (46).

„Hebräische Bibel und Altes Testament“, das dritte Kapitel, berührt sich thematisch sowohl mit dem fünften Kapitel, „Theologien vorliegender Hebräischer Bibeln und Alter Testamente“, als auch mit dem letzten Kapitel, „Jüdische oder christliche Theologie der Hebräischen Bibel oder des Alten Testaments“, insofern die unterschiedlichen Kanonformen und Auffassungen der beiden Religionen im Blick sind. Für Erstere bringt Schmid den passenden Vergleich von „Zentrum und Peripherien“ ein (79). Den Ausdruck „Alter Bund“ führt er auf Melito von Sardes zurück (73); er ist aber bereits in 2 Kor 3,14 belegt.

Im vierten Kapitel geht es um Abgrenzungen der alttestamentlichen Theologie gegenüber anderen Disziplinen (§14) und methodische Grundentscheidungen (§15). Insgesamt behandelt Schmid darin zehn verschiedene Aspekte, die reiche Erfahrung

und gesunde Unterscheidung bezeugen. Dabei plädiert er für eine „Respektierung der Polyphonie“ (97) und dafür, dass die Bibel „wie jedes andere Buch“ zu lesen ist (99). Er lenkt den Blick bereits auf den „textlich produktiven Vorgang innerbiblischer *Rezeption und Auslegung*“ (106), der für ihn einen Schlüssel für die Deutung vieler Schriften und Stellen in der Folge bietet. In der Spannung zwischen „Deskriptivität und Normativität“ entscheidet er sich vorsichtig und balanciert: „Ethische Folgerungen aus Bibeltexten zu ziehen ist legitim, aber es ist methodisch kontrolliert zu leisten“ (111).

Das sechste Kapitel behandelt die „Theologien der drei Kanontteile und ihrer Teilsammlungen“. Dort kommen in §18, das ebenso wie §32 auf Schmid's Sammelband *Schriftgelehrte Traditionsliteratur* (FAT 77; Tübingen 2011) basiert, zur Tora unter Anderem die Priesterschrift, die Nichtpriesterschriftliche Urgeschichte, Erzelterngeschichte, Mose-Exodus-Erzählung und Deuteronomium zur Sprache. Zuvor, in „Theologie der Tora als Gesamtzusammenhang“ (124-131), zeigt er, von Dtn 34 her argumentierend, die drei Motive der Landverheißung, von Mose als Erzprophet und der Begrenzung der Lebenszeit auf 120 Jahre als Verbindungen zu Genesis 13, Deuteronomium 18 und Genesis 6 auf. Für P zieht er vor allem Genesis 1–2 und Exodus 39–40 heran; ihr „ursprüngliches Ende“ dürfte in der Sinaiperikope gelegen sein (131-132). Nicht-P sei gekennzeichnet durch Universalisierung und Enteschatologisierung; dies wird an der Sintflut- und der Turmbauerzählung deutlich (135-137). In ähnlicher Weise behandelt Schmid in §19 und 20 wichtige Momente und Zusammenhänge der Hauptwerke bzw. Teilsammlungen von Nevi'im und Ketuvim.

Seine *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments*. Eine Einführung (Darmstadt 2014) bildet den Hintergrund für viele Ausführungen im siebten Kapitel, „Theologiegeschichte Grundlinien der Literaturgeschichte“. Darin sieht er das Alte Testament „auf dem Weg zu einer Theologie“ (177) und nimmt vielfach „Fort-schreibung“ an; als Beispiele nennt er Deuteronomium, Deuterocesaja und Chronik (179-181). In den §22-28 geht er die historischen Phasen durch, die wesentlich die Ausbildung der alttestamentlichen Schriften geprägt haben, angefangen vom Untergang des Nordreichs 722 v.Chr. bis zur Makkabäerkrise 167–164 v.Chr. und ordnet in die jeweiligen Perioden Bücher bzw. Stellen ein. So verbindet er mit der Bewahrung Jerusalems 701 v.Chr. Zionspsalmen und den Verstockungsauftrag im Jesajabuch (192-193), mit dem Untergang Judas 587 v.Chr. Psalm 48 sowie, davon abhängig, Jer 6,22-26 (200-201), um einige Beispiele zu nennen.

Im achten Kapitel geht es um „Themen alttestamentlicher Theologie“, wobei Schmid sich des „Problems der Systematisierung“ und auch der Schwierigkeit von Auswahl sowie Anordnung bewusst ist (225). Zuerst, bevor es überhaupt um Inhalte geht, bespricht er in §29 literarische Genres; dabei nennt er auch bedeut-same, oft zu wenig beachtete Aspekte wie die stereometrische Darstellungsweise (228) oder die „Abstimmung der Prophetenbücher untereinander“ (235). Grundlegend und dementsprechend ausführlich ist §30, mit „Wahrnehmungen und Wirkungen Gottes“, wobei die erste Marginalie spitz als „Keine Gotteslehre im Alten Testament“ formuliert ist, innerhalb des Textes jedoch mit „nur sehr bescheidende [sic] Ansätze der Entwicklung einer ‚Gotteslehre‘“ etwas relativiert wird (242). Schmid führt dann wesentliche geschichtliche Momente in der Erkenntnis des biblischen Gottes an, angefangen von „archaischen Erinnerungen“ an einen Berg- und Wettergott (246), über u.a. die „Solarisierung der Gottesvorstellung“, „imperiale Prägungen“ (252 und 254) bis hin zu „Engeln und Zwischenwesen“ (262).

§31, „Von der Gegenwelt zur Lebenswelt“ (266), greift auf Schmidts Buch *Schöpfung* (Themen der Theologie 4; Darmstadt 2012) zurück. Darin geht er im Zusammenhang mit Genesis 9 auch auf die Einführung der Todesstrafe ein, als Modifizierung gegenüber der Schöpfungsordnung von Genesis 1 (274). In den folgenden Paragraphen 32 bis 38 bespricht er Themen wie „Gottes Eingreifen in der Geschichte“, „Politische Theologie“, „Recht und Gesetz“, „Tempelkult und Opfer“, usw. In §39, „Deutungen des Menschen“, hebt er auch „Gottes Zuwendung zu den ‚Armen‘“ hervor (378). §40, der letzte im achten Kapitel, bringt mit „Vielfalt und Einheit alttestamentlicher Theologie“, ähnlich wie der erste darin (§29), weniger einen konkreten Inhalt der biblischen Texte als vielmehr einen übergeordneten, reflektierenden Aspekt. Schmid sieht dabei die „Bewahrung einer gewissen Vielfalt als Ziel der Überlieferungsbildung“ (385).

Schmidts Buch hat viele Vorzüge. Es sammelt unter mehreren Rücksichten wichtige Aspekte zu dem, was das Alte Testament über Gott sagt, und ermöglicht durch diese Bündelung eine Zusammenschau. Die „mehrfachen Durchgänge“, mit den verschiedenen Akzenten der einzelnen Kapitel, hängen mit der Entstehung des Buches und den Vorarbeiten dazu zusammen und führen zwar zu Wiederholungen bei Büchern, Texten und Motiven, bilden aber auch einen Reichtum. Schmid erweist sich als Fachmann, der viel Literatur verarbeitet hat, einen Überblick besitzt und mit den Diskussionspunkten vertraut ist. Ihm ist ein Anliegen, die biblischen Schriften sprachlich, geschichtlich und in ihrem Bezug auf die Gesellschaft zu verstehen. Er sieht diese Bücher vielfach als aufeinander reagierend und ihre Entstehung oft als redaktionelle Prozesse. Zudem gibt es viele wertvolle Einzelbeobachtungen, wie z.B. die Gründe für das Überleben der Religion Judas (199), oder die Verheißung vom Neuen Bund in Jer 31 als Gegenposition zur Belehrung von Dtn 6 (381). Die Marginalien und die klare Strukturierung sowohl der Kapitel als auch der Paragraphen tragen zur leichteren Lesbarkeit und Orientierung bei.

Über manche Bestimmungen der literarischen Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse mag man streiten, wie etwa Psalm 48 als Vorlage für Jeremia 6 (s.o.), ebenso über einige geschichtliche Zuschreibungen von Texten oder die immer fragwürdiger werdende Aufteilung in Schichten in der Tora (mit P und Nicht-P). Wichtiger aber und für eine Diskussion lohnenswert ist Schmidts Konzept der „impliziten Theologie“ (ab 45, auch 182, und öfter).

Schon der Prolog der Bibel, Gen 1,1 – 2,3 präsentiert eine Art von ‚systematisierter‘ Gotteslehre, mit exakt 35 Belegen für ‚Gott‘, einer Vielzahl von Tätigkeiten und klaren Steigerungen. Damit steht eine hoch entwickelte Vorstellung des biblischen Gottes bereits am Anfang. Das Schilfmeerlied, Ex 15,1-18, wiederum zeigt eine ganz markante theologische Komposition mit seiner Kombination von Rückblick auf das Auszugsgeschehen in Vv. 1-10 und Vorblick auf den weiteren Weg bis zur Inthronisation Jhwhs als König in seinem Heiligtum auf dem Berg [Zion] in Vv. 12-18, mit der doppelten Frage nach seiner Unvergleichlichkeit als Scharnier in V. 11. Ähnliches gilt für Deuteronomium 32, das Lied des Mose, das mit siebenmaligem „Fels“ erstmalig und offenbar gezielt eine neue Auffassung von Jhwh einbringt und überdies in deutlicher Strukturierung die Beziehung zwischen ihm und dem Volk modellartig sowie grundlegend erfasst.

Solche systematische und offensichtlich reflektierte theologische Formung gilt auch für größere Abschnitte, wie z.B. die Sinai-Perikope im Buch Exodus. Allein schon die Verschränkungen von Bundesangebot und –schluss, mit Dekalog und

Bundesbuch dazwischen, sowie die Klammer der Heiligtumstexte (Exodus 25–31 und 35–40) um Bundesbruch und göttliche Selbstkundgabe in der Gnadenrede in Exodus 32–34 weisen auf wohl überlegte und sogar sich in der Großkomposition ausdrückende Vorstellungen über Jhwh hin. Sofern man die einzelnen Schriften der Bibel auch als bewusst so geplante Werke auffasst, zeigen sich durch Häufigkeit oder einmalige Motive ebenfalls recht deutliche theologische Akzente. „Der Heilige Israels“ im Jesajabuch oder das Weinen und unermüdliche Agieren (mit שׁוֹכֵם Hi) Gottes bei Jeremia sind Beispiele. Selbst bei Einzelsalmen, wie Psalm 23 mit Jhwh als Hirt und Wirt, oder Psalm 121 mit Gott als „Schützer“, lässt sich oft ein prägnantes theologisches Profil erkennen. Es mag keine „Gotteslehre“ im wörtlichen Sinn sein, tritt aber doch sehr augenscheinlich zutage.

Angesichts des literarischen Charakters der biblischen Schriften ist eine systematisch ausformulierte ‚Lehre‘ auch kaum zu erwarten; dennoch enthalten sie, in Einzeltexten sowie in den Charakteristika der Bücher, eine Vielfalt und Fülle theologisch unterschiedlicher Positionen, die auf Reflexion und synthetisches Denken schließen lassen, die auch nach Schmidts Auffassung Kennzeichen ‚expliziter Theologie‘ sind. Die als Beispiele genannten und andere Texte sind Zeugnisse einer künstlerisch hochstehenden Ausgestaltung dessen, was Menschen damals in ihrem Glauben und Leben erfahren haben. Hätten diese sie als dogmatische Lehrsätze formuliert, wir würden sie heute kaum mehr lesen – in ihrer Form als Erzählungen und Gedichte dagegen vermitteln sie unaufhörlich ihre unvergängliche Botschaft.

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Carmen Joy IMES, *Bearing Yhwh's Name at Sinai. A Reexamination of the Name Command of the Decalogue* (Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 19). University Park, PA, Eisenbrauns, 2018. vii-227 p. 16 × 24. €64,95

Il comandamento riguardante il nome di YHWH (d'ora in poi CN), riportato in Es 20,7 e nel parallelo di Dt 5,11, ha una lunga storia di interpretazione che fondamentalmente si sviluppa in due direzioni: secondo la maggior parte degli interpreti, il CN sarebbe ellittico nella sua formulazione, nella misura in cui contiene alcuni elementi semantici o sintattici impliciti e perciò stesso può essere inteso come la riduzione formale di un'espressione più articolata e circostanziata. Altri studiosi, invece, hanno del CN una percezione affatto distinta („nonelliptical reading”), e ritengono che la formulazione del precetto sarebbe non solo formalmente, ma anche semanticamente sufficiente, da intendersi perciò come un'ingiunzione contro una cattiva rappresentazione di YHWH.

Imes condivide il secondo approccio e, nella sua monografia — una versione riveduta della dissertazione dottorale dell'autrice —, sottopone il CN ad analisi di tipo linguistico, narrativo, storico e teologico, giungendo a una serie di conclusioni che possiamo così riassumere, basandoci sulla dichiarazione di intenzioni



dell'autrice esposta nel primo capitolo (che funge anche da introduzione): (a) il CN ha un valore di tipo «rappresentativo», nella misura in cui vieta «il “rappresentare male YHWH” da parte di coloro che portano il suo nome» (3); (b) il valore rappresentativo del «portare il nome di YHWH» può essere riconosciuto visivamente nella figura del sommo sacerdote, specialmente attraverso il suo abito sacerdotale e nel suo ministero, che spesso si sostanzia del “portare i nomi” delle tribù d'Israele di fronte a YHWH come pure del “mostrare il nome di YHWH” alla presenza d'Israele. Stabiliti questi capisaldi della sua interpretazione del comando, Imes offre un significato teologico dello stesso, corredato dalle relative conseguenze etiche che scaturiscono dall'ingiunzione a Israele di osservare il CN in qualità di partner obbediente nella sua alleanza con YHWH, come pure dal comando di portare il nome di YHWH a tutte le nazioni.

Dopo aver esposto, nei termini di cui sopra, i capisaldi della propria interpretazione nel corso del capitolo 1 (assai breve, ma evidentemente denso quanto a contenuti), con il capitolo 2 Imes entra maggiormente nel dettaglio dell'analisi. Ciò che abbiamo qui è un ampio status quaestionis, che consta della rassegna di una ventina di modalità di comprensione del CN, che fondamentalmente si sviluppano su due linee. La prima, quella preferita dagli studiosi, si basa sulla concezione della natura ellittica del CN e favorisce la sua comprensione come una proibizione contro i falsi giuramenti, una espressione impropria, un culto sbagliato, un uso magico, o un uso improprio consistente nel falso insegnamento. Nel riassumere i capisaldi di tale interpretazione l'autrice evidenzia come manchi un sostanziale accordo su un elemento implicito sostenibile, cosa che, a suo dire, finisce per inficiare la solidità dell'interpretazione in questione. L'altra linea, più ricca nell'interpretazione di **לִשׂוּא וְנִשָּׂא**, intende il CN sia come una proibizione contro l'azione sbagliata di “portare il nome di YHWH «invano»” che come un'indicazione dello stato di elezione di Israele, ed è parimenti sostenuta da molti studiosi.

Alla ricerca di un'interpretazione soddisfacente, nel capitolo 3 Imes conduce un riesame del CN a partire da attente e dettagliate considerazioni lessicografiche delle parole chiave **שָׁם**, **שׂוּא**, **נִשָּׂא** e **נִקָּה**. Lo scopo principale del capitolo, che consiste nello studio di **שָׁם** sia individualmente sia come parte delle espressioni idiomatiche, dimostra come questo lessico appaia nella Bibbia ebraica o in connessione con una dichiarazione di possesso (di tipo legale), o in relazione al disonore del nome di YHWH, oppure ancora in relazione con la santificazione dello stesso. **נִשָּׂא** significa «portare [un nome]», mentre **שׂוּא** preceduto da **ל** significa «invano», indicando una rappresentazione doppia o vuota. Tramite questa ricerca, condotta in vista della valutazione delle varie opzioni interpretative presenti tanto nella Bibbia ebraica quanto nelle traduzioni tradizionali e nella letteratura correlata, l'autrice giunge a concludere che la lettura più adeguata del CN sarebbe quella che tiene in giusta considerazione il “linguaggio di possesso” da parte di YHWH sul suo popolo e del conseguente dovere (da parte del popolo) di “rappresentare YHWH” nel migliore dei modi, evitando qualsiasi forma di mancanza di rispetto.

Nel capitolo 4, Imes parte nuovamente dal ribadimento della propria lettura del CN esposta nel capitolo 3 per giungere a un ulteriore punto focale della sua indagine, consistente nel riesaminare il precetto nel suo contesto narrativo più ampio, con particolare attenzione al Decalogo. Tale testo legislativo viene analizzato nella sua micro e macrostruttura come importante contesto letterario immediato



del CN, al fine di mostrare la forte connessione tra il primo comandamento (che ordina il culto esclusivo a YHWH) e il CN stesso: come basi della stipula dell'alleanza (134), questi due comandamenti indicano che Dio, destinatario esclusivo del culto, richiede che il suo popolo lo rappresenti giustamente, organizzando la propria vita secondo gli altri comandamenti.

Lo stabilimento del ruolo rappresentativo di Israele nel CN è quindi utilizzato per passare al capitolo più importante, ovvero il quinto, che affronta il tema del «portare il nome di YHWH al Sinai». Tale quinto capitolo si apre con la nozione di metafora concettuale, cioè «an analogical word-picture that exists as a feature of thought, shaping how reality is perceived and, consequently, expressed in various ways» (140). Il CN contiene due metafore concettuali, dal momento che **נשא** rappresenta il diritto di possesso da parte di YHWH, mentre **נשא** «portare» indica l'obbedienza del popolo come un processo itinerante. La metafora totale che risulta dalla combinazione di queste metafore concettuali, ovvero «portare il nome di YHWH», viene quindi realizzata nel modello del sommo sacerdote. Esodo 28 offre l'immagine del sommo sacerdote con il suo abito sacerdotale, e descrive la sua ordinazione in grande dettaglio, per lo più per mostrare come i nomi portati dal sommo sacerdote sui suoi ornamenti debbano essere intesi metaforicamente. Il nome di YHWH sull'*ephod* mostra come Dio sia colui che possiede ed elegge il popolo; il nome delle tribù sulle pietre d'onice mostra che le persone che ne formano parte appartengono a Dio e, quindi, hanno il dovere di rappresentarlo. Questa metafora concettuale del nome di YHWH, originariamente collocata e localizzata nel rituale del Sinai, si diffonde poi nel ruolo di Israele nei confronti delle nazioni: poiché Dio salvò Israele e lo elesse a emblema come suo vassallo prezioso, Israele deve rappresentare YHWH davanti alle nazioni degnamente e in modo santo con la sua obbedienza; altrimenti, violerebbe il CN, finendo col «portare il nome di YHWH invano». Tale lettura del CN, che potremmo definire «di rappresentanza», offre un quadro più ampio di tutto ciò che il popolo di Israele dice o fa riguardo alle significative conseguenze etiche contenute nel CN.

Considerato quanto emerge dalla sintesi fin qui riportata, possiamo certamente ritenere che il lavoro di Imes abbia raggiunto l'obiettivo di ulteriormente ampliare il raggio di interpretazione – già ben nutrito, come abbiamo visto – del CN, e lo abbia fatto in modo accattivante e a tratti persino convincente. Pertanto, i rilievi che andiamo qui di seguito a muovere non inficiano la considerazione globalmente positiva di questa proposta di lettura, ma vanno intesi come un ulteriore contributo alla riflessione su un tema di sicuro interesse.

Nel capitolo 5 l'autrice afferma che i nomi delle tribù israelite riportati sull'abito sacerdotale del sommo sacerdote sono un chiaro segno del fatto che Israele è presente e ricordato da YHWH, con tutto ciò che ne consegue (163-164). Tuttavia, nel giorno di Kippur il sommo sacerdote deve togliersi questi ornamenti quando entra nel Santo dei Santi per presentarsi a YHWH. Imes spiega questa curiosa eccezione sostenendo che si tratti di un segno di umiltà da parte di Israele che, così facendo, riconosce di non meritare di stare alla presenza di YHWH (166). A ben guardare, però, questo argomento non brilla per coerenza: i nomi delle tribù impressi sulle vesti del sommo sacerdote servono a mostrare visivamente lo stato di elezione di Israele da parte di YHWH e di appartenenza del popolo a lui, ciò che lascia chiaramente intendere il protagonismo divino nella scelta del popolo

eletto. In base a ciò, non si vede perché un tale simbolo della sovrana volontà divina debba venire sovvertito nel suo significato fondamentale per apparire come un orpello di cui Israele si fregia e, perciò stesso, di cui si deve spogliare in un momento di penitenza come quello rappresentato dal giorno del Kippur.

C'è ancora un altro punto non del tutto convincente. Riprendendo il lavoro di Hossfeld, Imes usa la sintassi של על נקרא שם come punto di partenza per sostenere la sua interpretazione di שם come dichiarazione di possesso. Tuttavia, tale formulazione sintattica non funziona sempre nella Bibbia ebraica come una formula di denominazione volta a dichiarare il possesso: ad esempio, in Rut 4,11.14 il sintagma funziona piuttosto come elogio di un individuo da parte degli altri; parimenti, in 1Cr 13,16, Sal 99,6, Lam 3,55 il sintagma si intende come l'azione di invocare YHWH nel contesto della preghiera. Ci paiono eccezioni piuttosto corpose, tanto quantitativamente che qualitativamente, per essere trascurate nell'elaborazione di una proposta alternativa per l'interpretazione di un sintagma.

Un altro argomento poco persuasivo può essere rintracciato in una delle argomentazioni proposte dall'autrice al fine di attribuire al CN un significato rappresentativo. Tale argomentazione specifica si basa sul fatto che diversi precetti del Decalogo non sono accompagnati dalla formulazione di sanzioni specifiche che fungano da corredo penale alla violazione della legge stessa. In buona sostanza, Imes questiona la natura strettamente giuridica dei precetti, adducendo come motivazione il fatto che molti comandamenti del Decalogo sono troppo vaghi per essere applicati e che mancano sanzioni specifiche per ogni violazione (116). Riteniamo che il valore giuridico del *corpus* legislativo rappresentato dal Decalogo costituisca un insieme troppo complesso e unico nel suo genere da poter essere derubricato a "collections of divine pronouncements intended to guide Israel's life and worship" (116).

In prospettiva di ampliamento della ricerca, sul solco di quanto iniziato da Imes, si può certamente dire che c'è ancora spazio per sviluppare il lavoro di indagine sul CN. Infatti, sebbene in sede di introduzione l'autrice affermi di voler sottoporre il CN alla ricerca storica (5), all'atto pratico limita questa prospettiva solo alle ricerche sui testi paralleli del Vicino Oriente antico (13-14), o a una breve discussione sull'uso successivo del CN come proibizione (25-26) e, soprattutto, a successive opzioni di traduzione per il CN (nel capitolo 3, in particolare 93-100). Per quanto l'autrice dichiari abbastanza chiaramente di non voler seguire un approccio di tipo diacronico nell'analisi del CN (4-5), uno sguardo al *Sitz im Leben* del CN potrebbe sicuramente gettare più luce sulla sua interpretazione e offrire un risultato che, alla fine, risulti più ricco e soddisfacente.

In conclusione, l'interpretazione del CN che emerge dallo studio di Imes può certamente essere molto utile a chi persegue una lettura sincronica del CN, nella misura in cui offre non solo una ricca interpretazione teologica relativa all'elezione del popolo e la sua missione di rappresentare YHWH, ma anche importanti conseguenze etiche da tenere in alta considerazione. Per le quali ragioni non resta che congratularsi sinceramente con l'autrice di questa stimolante monografia.

Brittany KIM, *"Lengthen Your Tent-Cords"*. The Metaphorical World of Israel's Household in the Book of Isaiah (Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 23). University Park, PA, Eisenbrauns, 2018. vii-245 p. 16 × 24. €64.95

This study represents the revision of Brittany Kim's doctoral dissertation (2014), defended at Wheaton College, under the guidance of Richard Schultz. The central idea in this book is the root metaphor of YHWH's household, as used in the book of Isaiah. Generally, metaphors related to this root metaphor have been treated separately. The broader approach adopted by Kim gives her the opportunity to include both the metaphor of Zion as daughter, wife and mother, as well as the metaphor of the servant. Thus, she takes more seriously the integral role of the Servant Songs. Of course, one might say that the household metaphor is not compatible with gender equality, especially when focusing on the metaphor of the wife as part of the household, but Kim is right in taking seriously the ancient Near Eastern family rules in her discussion. We cannot change ancient family patterns in the Bible; we only can interpret them differently for modern times (rightly defended by Kim, 185-186).

In four chapters the major metaphors are discussed: the people/Zion as Sons/Children (Chapter 2), as Daughter(s) (Chapter 3), as Mother/Wife (Chapter 4) and as the Servant (Chapter 5). In contrast to earlier studies, Kim also investigates the interrelationship among the four metaphors (Chapter 6). The presentation is clearly structured. Each chapter begins with an overview of the literal use of the metaphor elsewhere in the Bible (associated commonplaces), along with comparable uses of the metaphor in the ancient Near East. This evidence is important for understanding the "cognitive environment" of the metaphor. The major part of each chapter investigates the use of the metaphor in the book of Isaiah, followed by a summary and some conclusions with regard to a possible development of the discussed metaphor in Isaiah.

Chapter 1 begins with a short introduction on metaphor. Already much has been written on this topic in previous studies, and so it is fully justified that this discussion has been kept relatively short. Kim cites the method of analysis proposed by George Kennedy for rhetorical criticism (14-15): 1) delimitation of each rhetorical unit; 2) rhetorical situation of the unit; 3) kind of rhetoric in the light of its aim; 4) observations concerning the arrangement and style of the passage. However, it remains quite difficult to see how these steps are followed in Kim's discussions of the relevant texts from Isaiah. Apparently, the steps are integrated into the investigation, but not visibly worked out.

In Chapter 2, Kim first discusses texts that refer to the people of Israel as YHWH's children (e.g., Isa 1,2,4; 30,1-9; 43,6; 45,11; 63,8.16; 64,7). She points out the overlapping metaphors of parent and redeemer (27) which emphasize "YHWH's role as the people's advocate and defender". The second half of the chapter turns to an investigation of texts that present Israel as Zion's Sons/Children (e.g., Isa 37,3; 50,1-3; 51,17-20; 54,1.13; 57,3; 60,4.9; 62,5; 66,8). Though Kim in her introduction states that in general she translates the Hebrew בָּנִים as "children" and uses "sons" only when the context requires this option (17-18), she does not single out these exceptional texts. For example, in Isa 51,18 בָּנִים is rightly translated "sons" (41), even though the discussion starts with a reference to "Mother Zion, and her children". The decision to translate the text with "sons" needs to be explained.

Two arguments could have been put forward: 1) grammar (masculine participles), and 2) as Kim herself mentions, it was the task of a son to escort his drunken parents home. In the next paragraph, introducing Isa 54,1.13, Kim explicitly mentions Zion's incapacitated "sons". Maybe the pressure that is put on a PhD work can be seen here?

An interesting conclusion from Chapter 2 is that the people of Israel are never depicted as children of YHWH and Zion together, whereas the separate metaphors (children of YHWH, and children of Zion) are quite common. Here, however, a reader would be interested to read some sort of explanation. Are we to find here the deliberate avoidance of the idea of God as one who creates by procreation, in contrast to the ideas that were common in Israel's Umwelt? Kim refutes Roland Frye's claim that God is described with motherly features only with similes, so as to create a distance between YHWH and the image of a mother (33). However, she misses the point that several prophets, in presenting the Exile as God's punishment, seem to accuse especially women for their continuing veneration of goddesses like Ashera. If that is correct, then this could be an argument for a more careful use of female similes for God to prevent misunderstanding.

It is stated that from Isaiah 49 on the mother-child metaphor comes to the fore (35). Given Kim's accurate analysis of the ordered sequence of metaphors in the book of Isaiah, it would have been interesting to consider how the differences and changes in Isaiah may have corresponded to certain historical changes. For example, one might ask whether the emphasis on the mother-child metaphor could be related to the historical situation of exile. Even nowadays, mothers often are the ones who have to take care of their children in times of war.

In Chapter 3, Kim discusses the well-known phrase בַּת־שָׁן (among the discussed texts are Isa 1,8; 10,32; 16,1; 37,22; 49,15; 52,2; 62,11). In the discussion of 49,15, Kim admits that the verse may seem to incorporate the metaphor of God as the husband; however, she points out that this cannot be the intended meaning here (71-72), because the marriage metaphor has not yet appeared at this point in Isaiah. The daughter metaphor would be implicitly present here, which is an interesting analysis. Kim is right that, in fact, no clear mention is made of a marital status of Zion. Furthermore, she discusses the specific phrase "daughter my people" (Isa 22,4), the women of Israel as Zion's daughters (Isa 3,16-17; 4,4; 49,22; 60,4), and finally the women of Israel as YHWH's daughters (Isa 43,6). Kim concludes that the parent-child relationship is in the foreground in each of the discussed texts, even while the daughter metaphor is used in a flexible way.

Several times some intriguing observations are made. For example, Kim points out that Zion is addressed as "daughter" even though her "parents" are never mentioned or implied. A specific aspect of the daughter metaphor is the use of בַּת as a metaphor for cities (57). In the discussion of this metaphor, the opposite use seems to be missing, namely the fact that women also could represent cities. This is clearly the case in a Ugaritic text (KTU 1.40) where the *bt. 'ugrt* "daughter of Ugarit" is not only addressed, with parallel references to the walls of Ugarit and by the gates of Ugarit, but also summoned to take the lead in sacrificing. This makes it clear that in this ritual text the queen of Ugarit is representing the city of Ugarit. Another text that presents a woman as a metaphor for a city is Mic 4,8-10, where the queen of Israel (wife of Achaz, presumably pregnant with Hezekiah) seems to be described as the representation of the city of Zion. Likewise, in the apocryphal Book of Judith the woman Dinah, once raped by Shechem (Gen 34,1-5), is depicted as the representation of the defiled daughter of Zion (Jdt 9,8; see

I. Fischer, *Women Who Wrestled With God*. Biblical Stories of Israel's Beginnings [Collegeville, MN 2005] 98).

Chapter 4 presents Zion as mother and wife. In this chapter three groups of texts are described: Zion as mother of the people of Israel (among the discussed texts are Isa 3,16-17; 4,4; 37,3; 49,17-25; 50,1; 51,17-20; 54,1-3.13; 57,3; 60,4-5; 62,5; 66,7-12), followed by a part on Zion as YHWH's wife (Isa 50,1; 54,5-8; 57,3-13; 62,3-5), as well as Zion as wife of her sons (Isa 62,4-5). After considering carefully the evidence from ancient Near Eastern cultures, Kim concludes that several parallels from outside Israel might be adduced; she points out, however, that all of these texts "emphasize the aspect of sexuality and often imply multiple partners, while the latter [biblical-MK] highlights exclusivity and longevity" (111).

Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the surprising metaphor of the Servant of YHWH, which fits Kim's decision to work out the root metaphor of the household, i.e., the house of the father. According to Kim, the singular servant as a metaphor for a nation is not attested outside Israel (135), but here the ancient Near Eastern idea of the so-called "corporate personality" is overlooked. Often women have been taken as representatives for an entire people (see, e.g., A.M. Wetter, *On Her Account*. Reconfiguring Israel in Ruth, Esther, and Judith [London 2015]). The chapter is divided into four parts: Jacob/Israel as YHWH's servant (among the discussed texts are: Isa 41,8-9; 42,1-7; 42,18-21; 43,8-10; 43,23-24; 44,1-5.24-26; 45,4; 48,20); a second part on an unnamed representative of Israel as YHWH's servant (among the discussed texts are: Isa 49,1-9; 50,4-10; 51,1-8; 52,13 – 53,12); a third part on Zion as YHWH's servant (Isa 51,22); and a fourth on the faithful people as YHWH's servants (Isa 54,17; 56,1-8; 63,16-19; 66,14). In the discussion of Isa 42,1-7 (138-139), dealing with Israel as YHWH's servant, several arguments are made in defense of viewing Israel as the servant, such as the use of the plural in 42,9. The defense would have been more convincing if notice were taken of the Masoretic unit division: the Hebrew text (also Qumran), as well as Greek and Syriac manuscripts, take 42,1-9 as a unit, whereas the division after 42,7 is only rarely supported (in some Greek and Latin manuscripts).

Chapter 6 concludes the study. A sharp distinction is made between the individual servant, portrayed as highly active in working out YHWH's deliverance, and Zion, presented more as a passive servant. Thus, in Kim's words, "the servant and mother images portray two aspects of the same reality — YHWH's restoration of the remnant and of their land" (184). The book closes with very helpful distribution charts showing the occurrences of the discussed metaphors in the book of Isaiah, followed by a bibliography, an index of authors and of scriptural citations.

This study contains well-written and scholarly honest exegetical discussions that might be of help for any scholar interested in these metaphors in the book of Isaiah. The use of recent publications in the detailed textual investigations is impressive. Several times this study opens up new vistas. A good example is the discussion of Isa 62,4-5 with the complicated mixed metaphors of Zion as wife of YHWH as well as of her sons in light of the conceptual blending theory (129-131). This book is a must for all those working on biblical metaphors or on the exegesis of the book of Isaiah.

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Marjo C. A. KORPEL

Jean-Pierre SITZLER, *Der Tod in den Weisheitsschriften des Alten Testaments*. Eine Untersuchung zu den Büchern Kohelet und Weisheit (Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament). Sankt Ottilien. EOS Verlag, 2019. x-409 p. 15 × 21. €39,95

Im Zentrum der alttestamentlichen und frühjüdischen Weisheitsliteratur stehen, wie in den weisheitlichen Texten aus dem alten Ägypten und dem alten Vorderen Orient, die Fragen nach dem Wesen des Menschen, nach der Orientierung in einer oft undurchschaubaren Welt und nach der glücklichen Gestaltung des Lebens in der Familie und der Gesellschaft. Diese grundsätzliche anthropologische und ethische Ausrichtung der Weisheitsschriften schließt Reflexionen über den Tod, das Leben nach dem Tod und das Verhältnis von Gerechtigkeit, Leben und Tod ein. So bieten alle kanonischen und deuterokanonischen Weisheitsschriften kürzere oder längere Ausführungen zum Tod des Menschen, zum Umgang mit der Sterblichkeit und zur möglichen Überwindung der Todesgrenze. Im Rahmen der theologisierten Weisheit – und zu dieser zählen alle Weisheitsschriften der Hebräischen Bibel und der Septuaginta – werden die Fragen nach dem Tod und dem Leben nach dem Tod stets in einer engen Beziehung zur Rede von Gott behandelt. Die Anthropologie der Weisheitsschriften, und damit auch ihre Thanatologie und die Eschatologie, ist damit durchgehend theologisch bestimmt.

Die hier vorgestellte Studie, eine von Hubert Irsigler betreute, im Sommer 2018 an der katholisch-theologischen Fakultät der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau angenommene Dissertation, thematisiert das Todesverständnis in dem in der zweiten Hälfte des 3. Jahrhunderts v.Chr. entstandenen Buch Kohelet und der mutmaßlich in der Zeit der Alleinherrschaft des Augustus (31 v.Chr. – 14 n.Chr.) komponierten Sapiaientia Salomonis. In engem Anschluss an die von Hubert Irsigler und Carmen Diller aus sprach- und literaturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive modifizierte und um Elemente aus der von John L. Austin und John R. Searle entwickelten Sprechaktheorie erweiterte historisch-kritische Methode untersucht Sitzler vier ausgewählte Texte aus dem Koheletbuch und aus der Sapiaientia Salomonis (Koh 3,16-22; 11,9 – 12,7; Sap 2,21 – 3,12; 4,7-19). Diese vier Texte analysiert Sitzler hinsichtlich des hebräischen bzw. griechischen Ausgangstextes und seiner Kohärenz („Textkonstitution“), hinsichtlich der verwendeten Gattungen, Motive und Traditionen („Texttypik“), hinsichtlich der Stellung im Kontext des jeweiligen Buches und dessen literarischer Kontexte („Textverankerung“) sowie hinsichtlich der Überlieferungs-, Redaktions- und Kompositionsgeschichte („Textgeschichte“), um abschließend eine Auslegung („Textinterpretation“) und einen Textvergleich vorzustellen. Die vorgeführten Analysen sind sehr textnah, wenngleich recht schematisch und mitunter redundant. Die Übersetzungen der biblischen Texte versuchen den hebräischen und griechischen Text unmittelbar abzuspiegeln. Die Analysen bezeugen den großen Fleiß des Verfassers, auch hinsichtlich seiner Auseinandersetzung mit der einschlägigen Sekundärliteratur, hätten aber zumindest für die Druckfassung der Dissertation im Blick auf Leserfreundlichkeit und Stringenz der Argumentation stark gestrafft werden können. Die methodische Einführung ebenso die langen bibelkundlichen und einleitungswissenschaftlichen Passagen zum Koheletbuch und zur Sapiaientia Salomonis wären verzichtbar gewesen. Die im Einzelnen erzielten Ergebnisse sind überzeugend, bieten aber insgesamt wenig neue Erkenntnisse.



Das Spezifikum der gattungsmäßig als Lehrgedicht bezeichneten Perikope Koh 3,16-22 sieht Sitzler in der Bestimmung der Allgemeinheit des Todesgeschicks von Mensch und Tier (vgl. Psalm 49). Das hinter Koh 3,16-22 stehende Gottesbild sei das des Richters, so vor allem im ersten Teil der Passage, in der Kohelet Recht und Gerechtigkeit gegenüberstelle (vgl. Ezechiel 18; 33; Habakuk 1; Jesaja 1; 5; 59; Psalm 72) und das des Schöpfers, so im zweiten Teil, in dem Kohelet sich auf Genesis 2-3 zurückbeziehe.

Für den zweiten ausführlich untersuchten Text aus dem Koheletbuch, Kap. 11,9 – 12,7, arbeitet Sitzler neben dem Rückgriff auf biblische Schöpfungstraditionen eine Rezeption prophetisch-apokalyptischer Vorstellungen („Tag Jahwes“) sowie motivische Parallelen in der ägyptischen, mesopotamischen und griechisch-hellenistischen Literatur („carpe-diem-Motiv“) heraus. Gegenüber der grundsätzlichen Bestimmung des Todes als absoluter Grenze in Koh 3,16-22 sei die Lehre in Koh 11,9 – 12,7, in der 11,9b später ergänzt worden sei, zumindest offen für die Hoffnung auf ein Leben nach dem Tod, da der Lebensatem, und damit die Größe, welche die Personalität und die Individualität des Menschen ausmachten, zu Gott zurückkehrten.

Die Perikope Sap 2,21 – 3,12 bestimmt Sitzler als eine weisheitliche Lehrerzählung. Eine solche Gattungsbestimmung sollte allerdings auf didaktisch ausgerichtete Prosaerzählungen, wie z.B. die Hiobnovelle, beschränkt sein. Den literar- und traditionsgehistorischen Hintergrund von Sap 2,21 – 3,12 sieht Sitzler zu Recht vor allem in Genesis 1-3; wobei aber auch Genesis 4 zu bedenken gewesen wäre. Gegenüber den beiden Texten aus dem Koheletbuch erkennt Sitzler in der Sapientia Salomonis zutreffend eine entscheidende Differenzierung und Weiterentwicklung des Todesverständnisses. So unterscheide der Verfasser der Sapientia Salomonis zwischen einem biologischen und einem geistig-seelischen Tod. Während der biologische Tod allen Menschen bevorstehe, würden nur die Frevler auch vom psychischen Tod betroffen. Die Gerechten hingegen erlebten aufgrund ihrer Treue zu Gott über den physischen Tod hinaus die ewige Gottesgemeinschaft (Sap 3,1). Der Tod wird damit zu einem prinzipiellen Unterscheidungsmerkmal zwischen Frevlern und Gerechten, insofern sich nur für letztere die Erschaffung zur Unvergänglichkeit verwirkliche.

In der zweiteiligen Lehrrede 4,7-15.16-19, in der 4,15 eine Glosse darstelle, werde die gerichtstheologische Differenzierung des Todesgeschicks dann im Blick auf Heilsankündigung für den früh verstorbenen Gerechten vertieft. In beide Exegesen zur Sapientia Salomonis bezieht Sitzler ausgiebig frühjüdische Texte aus Qumran und aus der Henochüberlieferung, jüdische Grabinschriften (vgl. M.V. Blischke, *Die Eschatologie der Sapientia Salomonis* [FAT II/26; Tübingen 2007] 223-263) sowie pagane Texte (unter anderem zur Behandlung des vorzeitigen Todes ausgewählter Menschen bei Cicero und Seneca) ein. Dass der Verfasser der Sapientia Salomonis auch auf das Vierte Makkabäerbuch zurückgegriffen habe (327; 373), ist angesichts dessen später Entstehung (1./2. Jahrhundert n.Chr.) ausgeschlossen. Umgekehrt sollte der Vergleich mit Platon nicht einfach mit dem Hinweis, dass zu große (zeitliche?) Differenzen bestünden (303), ausgeblendet werden. Hier wäre vielmehr der in der neueren Forschung häufig aufgezeigten Vermittlung seitens des Mittelplatonismus und der Stoa genauer nachzugehen (vgl. dazu Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, „Die Sapientia Salomonis im Kontext hellenistisch-römischer Philosophie“, *Sapientia Salomonis [Weisheit Salomos]* [Hrsg. K.-W. Niebuhr] [Sapere XXVII; Tübingen 2015] 219-256).

Für alle vier ausführlich exegesierte Texte aus dem Kohelethbuch und der Sapientia Salomonis vermag Sitzler gut die tiefe Verwurzelung in älteren israelitisch-jüdischen Schriften, vor allem in den Büchern Genesis, Psalmen und Ijob, aber auch in einzelnen prophetischen Schriften, die sukzessive Aufnahme paganer Vorstellungen aus der ägyptischen, vorderorientalischen und griechisch-hellenistischen Literatur sowie die Verortung in einem schulischen Kontext wahrscheinlich zu machen. Dabei arbeitet Sitzler treffend die spezifischen Unterschiede zwischen der Anthropologie und der Eschatologie des Kohelethbuchs und der Sapientia Salomonis hinsichtlich der Freiheit und der Erkenntnisfähigkeit des Menschen heraus. Die Sapientia Salomonis geht hier einige Schritte weiter als Kohelet, der sich jeglicher Spekulationen über die Todesgrenze hinaus enthält. In gewisser Weise lässt sich die Sapientia Salomonis nach den Untersuchungen Sitzlers als eine Korrektur der Diesseitsorientierung Kohelets und als eine eschatologische Vertiefung seiner Schöpfungs- und Gerichtstheologie lesen. Dabei bleibt, wie Sitzler überzeugend nachzeichnet, die Sapientia Salomonis, trotz aller über Kohelet hinausgehenden Integrationen paganer Vorstellungen, grundsätzlich fest auf dem Boden jüdischer Traditionen. Dies gelte gerade auch für ihr Konzept der  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ , das sich sehr viel stärker mit Kohelets Vorstellung vom göttlich verliehenen Lebensatem berühre, als mit griechisch-hellenistischen Seelenvorstellungen, und das in der Fluchtlinie der biblischen Vorstellung für die von Gott geschenkte Persönlichkeit und Identität des Menschen stehe.

Insofern der Titel des Buches von Sitzler eine Behandlung des Todes in den Weisheitsschriften des Alten Testaments verspricht, hätte man sich zumindest auch eine Analyse ausgewählter Texte aus dem Buch Jesus Sirach gewünscht (vgl. z.B. Sir 14,11-19; 17,1 – 18,11; 40,1-17; 41,1-4). Denn in seiner um 180 v.Chr. entstandenen hebräischen Fassung und in seiner im letzten Drittel des 2. Jahrhunderts v.Chr. in Alexandria angefertigten griechischen Übersetzung stellt das Sirachbuch ein wichtiges literatur- und theologiegeschichtliches Bindeglied zwischen Kohelethbuch und der Sapientia Salomonis dar. Beigegeben sind dem Werk Sitzlers, das leider keinerlei Register hat, zwei kleine Exkurse zum Verständnis von  $\eta\kappa\lambda$  im Kohelethbuch (68-73) und zur Verwendung von Ossuarien in Form eines Hauses (229-230).

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## Novum Testamentum

Paolo MASCILONGO, *Il Vangelo di Marco*. Commento esegetico e teologico.  
Roma, Città Nuova Editrice, 2018. vii-968 p. 17 × 24. €55,25

P. Mascilongo defendió y publicó su tesis doctoral en Sagrada Escritura en el Instituto Bíblico de Roma (2010), titulada *Ma voi, chi dite che io sia?* Analisi narrativa dell'identità di Gesù e del cammino dei discepoli nel Vangelo secondo



Marco alla luce della «Confessione di Pietro» (Mc 8,27-30) (AnBib 192; Roma 2011), bajo la dirección del Prof. Jean-Noël Aletti. Sobre la base de aquel trabajo ha preparado este comentario, de tipo exegético-teológico que, en la línea de los Santos Padres y de los autores de la Edad Media se mueve en tres planos: Letra-historia, analogía o reflexión y anagogía o sentido espiritual y escatológico. El primer plano es un análisis literario del texto italiano, traducido por el mismo Mascilongo, remitiendo al original griego, palabra por palabra, verso a verso, con referencias de tipo filológico, en perspectiva de crítica textual y de narratología, en clave de totalidad, teniendo en cuenta el contexto canónico de la Biblia, y especialmente los sinópticos. El autor escoge y analiza perícopas bastante extensas, fijando el sentido, unidad y despliegue literario del texto.

En segundo lugar, Mascilongo realiza un comentario del sentido y mensaje del texto, según el modelo de la alegoría clásica, destacando el aporte simbólico (dogmático) de cada pasaje. A su juicio, Marcos, es, sobre todo, un libro teológico-ecclesial, el documento clave de una comunidad que expone en forma narrativa las implicaciones de Jesús como Cristo, Hijo de Dios. De esa forma investiga y expone Mascilongo el contenido del texto, destacando su contenido temático, en diálogo con las opciones y perspectivas teológico-literarias de otros exegetas, desde un horizonte hermenéutico cristiano (católico).

En tercer lugar, viene la profundización moral, espiritual y escatológica, poniendo así de relieve lo que Marcos aporta en nuestro tiempo, para una nueva pastoral y catequesis. En este plano, el autor se siente y mueve con más libertad para exponer su propia visión del texto y su aportación para entender el movimiento de Jesús, en un contexto de actualidad, presentando el evangelio como libro que puede leerse y aplicarse en dimensión de Iglesia.

El autor cita y estudia la mejor bibliografía exegético-teológica de la actualidad, especialmente la italiana y la anglosajona. En conjunto, su obra ofrece una visión panorámica casi completa de la investigación que se ha realizado sobre Marcos en los últimos decenios, y simplemente por eso merece nuestra admiración y agradecimiento; ella es quizá la mejor “enciclopedia” que existe hoy sobre la teología y aplicación pastoral (ecclesial) de Marcos, en perspectiva católica.

Mascilongo ha recogido y organizado de forma sintética lo mejor que hoy puede decirse sobre Marcos, vinculando la lectura narrativa y literaria del texto con la confesión creyente (cristiano-católica), desde una hermenéutica de connaturalidad, en sintonía con el mensaje de la Iglesia, a modo de comprensión católica (es decir, universal) del evangelio. Pero, dicho eso, debo añadir, como el mismo autor confiesa al principio de su introducción (5-30), que, más que un comentario propiamente dicho, en el sentido académico del término, este libro es *una guía de lectura*, que puede compararse con la que en España había realizado en perspectiva antropológico-narrativa M. Navarro, *Marcos* (Guías de Lectura del Nuevo Testamento; Estella 2006), texto al que P. Mascilongo no ha prestado quizá la atención que merecía, a pesar de la cercanía de sus planteamientos exegéticos.

Ciertamente, la guía de Mascilongo es más erudita y enciclopédica, en perspectiva teológico-pastoral, y tiene en ese aspecto sus ventajas. La de Navarro está, sin embargo, más vinculada al dramatismo interior del evangelio, en un plano narrativo y de transformación personal, dejando que el texto permanezca en su extrañeza original, fiel al movimiento más rugoso del Jesús de Marcos, con su luz y sombra, pues, como ella dice, sin sombra no logran destacarse los perfiles de este evangelio, con su carga de protesta y de mutación antropológica. Mascilongo, en

cambio, se encuentra más centrado en una visión más eclesial del Cristo de Marcos, en un contexto secular de experiencia y vida de Iglesia, diciendo en ese plano lo mejor que puede decirse sobre el evangelio.

Por eso, dentro de una lectura canónica del texto, me atrevo a decir que Mascilongo se ha ocupado quizá demasiado poco del contexto. Significativamente, él empieza confesando que siempre le han gustado las introducciones largas, porque ellas permiten situar el origen, temática y finalidad de la obra comentada. Pero, en este caso, él ha preferido prescindir de ella, para no influir demasiado en los lectores, dejando que ellos saquen las consecuencias del texto, situándose en libertad (en gesto de creación personal) ante el mensaje de Marcos. Por eso ha querido que su libro sea una guía de lectura no directiva del evangelio, y por eso su introducción ha sido breve y convencional, con las aportaciones generales que se suelen introducir en cada caso.

Comprendo perfectamente la preocupación y la opción de Mascilongo, pues otros hemos sentido su misma preocupación al situarnos ante el tema, como indiqué en *Evangelio de Marcos*. La Buena Noticia de Jesús (Comentarios al Nuevo Testamento; Estella 2012), quiso resolver de otra manera el problema de Mascilongo. Por eso, me sentí obligado a escribir una larga introducción histórico-temática, pensando que, para que el lector pudiera situarse ante Marcos, debía conocer su encuadramiento histórico y su finalidad teológica, pues de lo contrario corría el riesgo de situar el texto de Marcos y su comentario en un vacío histórico-hermenéutico, e incluso eclesial.

Marcos es un texto clave, un texto-nudo en el despliegue del Nuevo Testamento y de la historia de la Iglesia. En él se cruzan y fecundan las tradiciones narrativas de Jesús con el mensaje pascual de Pablo y la vida de una iglesia donde son claras las huellas de los hermanos de Jesús con Pedro y los Doce. Este camino ha sido retomado por Mateo, Lucas y Juan, y podría desembocar también en un tipo de gnosis. Creo que algo de esto hay que decirlo, para situarse y situar a los lectores en la encrucijada de Marcos, para aplicar luego su texto, en otro plano, en la actual situación de la Iglesia y del mundo.

Eso es lo que, a mi juicio, falta en Mascilongo, a pesar del carácter enciclopédico de su obra y de la abundancia abrumadora de sus referencias bibliográficas. Da la impresión de que él ha situado a Marcos sobre un vacío histórico, temático y eclesial, como si el texto “sagrado” pudiera entenderse en sí mismo, sin situarlo en su contexto propio, en el despliegue de la Iglesia antigua y en el horizonte hermenéutico de la actualidad, de manera que el lector se ve obligado a introducir en el fondo de Marcos su propio contexto de la Iglesia antigua y de la Iglesia actual.

Teniendo en cuenta estas dos pequeñas correcciones de rumbo u orientación, este libro se vuelve especialmente luminoso. (a) Para entender bien a Marcos en su contexto antiguo, debemos saber de dónde viene (a qué incentivos quiere responder) y a dónde se dirige; los problemas que quiere resolver acudiendo a las tradiciones de la “historia” de Jesús, en su relación con Pablo y con otras iglesias, a quiénes quiere corregir, superar o apoyar, en su contribución al despliegue de la Iglesia. (b) Para seguir entendiendo a Marcos hay que situar su texto en la dinámica actual de la cultura y de la Iglesia. Da la impresión de que P. Mascilongo lo ubica y estaciona de un modo inmediato, como Palabra de Dios, para un tipo de Iglesia católica actual, de forma que puede citar para entenderlo, sin precisar su enfoque, unos textos espléndidos de Urs von Balthasar o J. Ratzinger que aquí están fuera de lugar.

Una aplicación o adaptación de Marcos a la identidad y tarea de la Iglesia actual puede (y, como digo, quizá debe) hacerse, en una guía de lectura del evangelio, pero hay que concretarlo mejor, desde la perspectiva del horizonte hermenéutico antiguo y moderno. Sólo precisando, vinculando y distinguiendo esos aspectos (situación original del texto y finalidad actual), podemos lograr que Marcos hable desde sí mismo y para nuestro tiempo. Cuanto más leamos el texto en su origen mejor podremos entenderlo y aplicarlo.

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Adam COPENHAVER, *Reconstructing the Historical Background of Paul's Rhetoric in the Letter to the Colossians* (Library of New Testament Studies 585). London, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018. v-268 p. 23,4 × 15,6.

For a long time, several scholars have attempted to identify a particular opponent who would exhibit all of the characteristics found in Paul's warnings in Col 2,6-23. These attempts have produced unattested historical reconstructions and have shown the circular nature of the reconstructive process. To identify the opponents, most of the scholars focus on key words in the text and use them to interpret the rest of the letter. This approach has increased the list of suspects but has not clarified the text itself. Copenhaver's monograph (hereafter AC) faces the challenge of how to portray Paul's opponents in Colossians using a suitable methodology to balance information provided by both historical and textual investigations.

AC's study avoids a narrow focus on the controversies suggested by the letter and instead aims to understand the whole text in relation to the history of the Lycus Valley. As a result, AC's proposal doubles the number of the opponents in the letter, even though he admits that they were not part of "an active and clearly defined group" (237). Paul's warnings in Col 2,8-23 deal with two different religious motifs, Judaism and pagan mysteries, that challenged the headship of Christ. "To speak of the 'Colossian Heresy' is both misguided and misleading, for Paul does not write the letter as a response to a particular opponent" (235). For AC, the argumentative threads intertwined in Col 2,8-23 do not describe a single local heresy or heretical movement within the Colossian congregation, nor within the Lycus Valley, but correspond to two different historical trends contrary to the fullness of Christ.

AC distinguishes these two historical threads in his exegetical analysis of Col 2,8-23. In v. 8 he observes an indefinite (τις) description of opponents who might represent any religion or philosophy, followed by some prepositional phrases (κατά) that indicate two distinctive groups, presenting "two separate extrapolations of the type of philosophy Paul has in mind. The παράδοσις refers to Judaism, while στοιχεῖα points to spiritual beings venerated by pagan religions" (202-203). This *partitio* in v. 8 is further developed in vv. 14-15. AC interprets the expression τὸ χειρόγραφον τοῖς δόγμασιν as a reference to Jewish codes and dogmas,

belonging to the first historical thread, while he understands the expression τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ τὰς ἐξουσίας as a reference to the kind of spiritual rulers and authorities associated with the second historical thread. Both statements remain broad and undefined but point to Christ's public accomplishment: Christ has abolished the Jewish codes and dogmas through the cross and has also triumphed over the spiritual powers and authorities venerated in other traditions.

AC then explores the specific practices reprehended in the following verses (vv. 16-19). In v. 16 the warning against Jewish practices is described in two stages, beginning with an allusion to laws for "eating and drinking", and then those that specify "new moons, festivals, and Sabbaths": this is a movement from extremely broad principles about food and drink to specific observances of Jewish holy days. In vv. 18-19 the argument moves from a broad historical pattern (an undefined ταπεινοφροσύνη and a general θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων) toward a concrete reference to the oracle of Apollo at Claros (identifiable in the text by ἐμβατεύω).

In vv. 20-23 Paul "summarizes the preceding warnings and provides final evaluations of the two historical threads [he] had in view" (227). He brings both threads together, belonging to the κόσμος, in contrast to Christ, and then satirizes the restrictions imposed by both Jewish and pagan religious traditions (v. 21), before pronouncing his final verdict that these ascetic practices are all worthless (vv. 22-23).

AC's exegetical analysis depends on assumptions that he acknowledges are not indubitable. His monograph is filled with "though" phrases that indicate his awareness that other scholars may well disagree with him. In v. 8 though some might argue that the definite article suggests otherwise, AC takes the view that "φιλοσοφία need not represent a particular school of philosophy" (198) but instead may stand for any system of study or thought, including any religion or philosophy. In v. 18 AC follows F.O. Francis' interpretation ("Re-Examination of the Colossian Controversy" [PhD diss., Yale University 1965]) of θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων as a subjective genitive (the worship offered by the angels to God); although Francis associates such worship with the Jewish practices of v. 16, AC prefers to correlate it with pagan cultic activity. AC recalls C.E. Arnold's study (*The Colossian Syncretism. The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* [WUNT 2.77; Tübingen 1995]), which concludes that in cultic activity in Asia Minor, angels were recognized as intermediaries between gods and humans. AC notes, nonetheless, that Francis' and Arnold's reconstructions of a cult that venerated angels are not supported by the historical evidence. AC claims, instead, that the difficulty — of identifying the real historical practice to which Paul objected — can be solved if one looks to the subsequent phrase, ἃ ἐόρακεν ἐμβατεύων.

Along with M. Dibelius ["Isis Initiation in Apuleius and Related Initiatory Rites", *Conflict at Colossae. A Problem in the Interpretation of Early Christianity Illustrated by Selected Modern Studies* (eds. F.O. Francis – W.A. Meeks) (Cambridge 1973) 61-121], and corroborating its technical meaning, AC reads ἐμβατεύω as a term related to rites of initiation in mystery cults. This interpretation requires more concessions. Though the role of ἐμβατεύω in the mysteries at the temple of Claros is less than certain, and though ἐμβατεύω "may not have been employed in every description of mystery initiation, it still stands as a commonly used term within the cultic proceedings of the oracle of Apollo at Claros" (219). This understanding of ἐμβατεύω thus demonstrates not only the historical background

of Paul's warning in Col 2,18 but also AC's reading of ταπεινοφροσύνη and θρησκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων (v. 18, cf. v. 23). Subordinating his interpretation of "humility" and the "cult of angels" to his questionable reading of ἐμβατεύω, AC uses the same kind of "circular process" that he criticized at the beginning of his monograph and sought to avoid in his research. Although he does not twist the whole textual evidence to fit with this understanding of ἐμβατεύω, he does evaluate most of the Paul's warnings against pagan religions as references to the cult of Apollo found in the Lycus Valley.

AC's analysis of the body of the church also depends on assumptions that may be questioned. Though he takes ἐκκλησία as a general term indicating the body of Christ (τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ), AC presupposes that Paul's warnings in Col 2,8-23 involve a local congregation, sharing the same cultural milieu of the other cities (Laodicea and Hierapolis) in the Lycus Valley.

AC's monograph is clear, precise, and well-organized. His exegesis is well informed, and his summaries make it easy to follow his line of thought. AC faces undoubtedly two of the most difficult challenges in the interpretation of the Pauline letters, not just Colossians, namely, the relationship between both rhetorical and historical situations, and the historical identity of the apostle's opponents. Some scholars may disagree strongly with AC's main methodological presupposition that "the rhetorical situation gives access to the historical situation" (89). AC admits that there is a gap between the rhetorical situation and the historical situation. He also acknowledges that the text reflects rhetorical concerns much more than historical accuracy, so there is a real limit to the kind of history that can be derived from the text (88). Nevertheless, he believes that a grasp of the rhetorical structures provides some light for a suitable historical reconstruction of Paul's opponents. Since no excavations of ancient Colossae have been fully accomplished to date, scholars may be limited to suggest some inferences compatible with the general evidence, valid in a broad sense for all cities in the Lycus Valley or for Asia Minor, but only hypothetically applicable to the Colossian community addressed in Paul's letter.

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Martin KARRER, *Johannesoffenbarung* – Teilband 1, Offb 1,1–5,14 (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Band XXIV/1). Ostfildern, Patmos – Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017. 488 p. 16.5 × 24. £82.00

Martin Karrer worked for most of his academic life on the Book of Revelation. In 1986 his dissertation (*Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief*. Studien zu ihrem literarischen, historischen und theologischen Ort [FRLANT 140; Göttingen 1986]) appeared, and he is now heavily involved in the preparation of the *Editio critica maior* of Revelation. The rich harvest of his continuous work on Revelation can now be found in his commentary on this book for the EKK-series, of which the first volume (on Revelation 1–5) has now been published.

The volume begins with an elaborate introduction which not only deals with the usual introductory issues, but also offers a discussion of the reception of

Revelation in the early Church, its position in the history of the formation of the canon, and its reception in the periods of the Middle Ages and Reformation. Karrer offers a detailed survey of the history of the textual transmission of Revelation. He considers the manuscripts of the so-called A-text (Codex Alexandrinus and related MSS) the most important group of textual witnesses, which includes the commentary on Revelation by Oecumenius. A second group represents the so-called S-text (Codex Sinaiticus, P<sup>47</sup> etc.). The research for the *Editio critica maior* should point out whether Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C) represents a third group in between the other two or a version of the text that precedes the other two types of text. Erasmus' edition of the New Testament (1516) determined the transmission of the text and the translations of Revelation for a long time. The mistake in Rev 22,18 in the Latin manuscript that Erasmus used by way of comparison (*libro* instead of *ligno*) resulted in translations like "book of life" up to the twentieth century.

Revelation's literary genre is mixed, and the qualification "apocalypse" is therefore inadequate, although the book includes apocalyptic traditions. Karrer characterizes it as a work of revelatory literature that is presented in the form of a letter and written in the style of prophetic writings (90, 210). His view of the composition of Revelation, taken to be an integral unity, follows what he considers the classical pattern of ancient rhetoric: 1,1-8: introduction, *prooemium* and *propositio* (i.e., the universal acceptance of Christ and the powerful rule of God); 1,9 – 3,22: *narratio*; 4,1 – 11,18: *probatio*; 11,19 – 19,10: *refutatio*; 21,1 – 22,5: *peroratio*; 22,6-21: epilogue. In spite of the work's Semitisms, most allusions to Scripture follow the text of the Septuagint. The Semitisms and other characteristics of Revelation's vocabulary and style imply that the author aimed for a high and innovative register of rhetorical language which deliberately includes mistakes in order to highlight the extra-ordinary character of specific issues for the audience (see 95-98 for an illuminating list of these characteristics).

The author can be called a Jewish Christian ("Judenchrist") who lived in the context of the Roman Empire (see the reference to the threat of the Kings of the East in Rev 16,12). He presupposes continuity between the chosen people of Israel and the followers of Jesus Christ and does not differentiate between Jewish and Christian victims of oppression (Rev 6,9-10; 18,24). His work, therefore, precedes a "parting of the ways" of Jews and Christians (64). His world-view implies that death is a constant threat against those who dedicate themselves to God in a radical way that involves avoidance of all worldliness (60, 62). The author identifies himself as a certain John who wrote his work on the island of Patmos in the period after the apostles (Rev 21,14). The absence of attributes to the name implies that he should not be identified with John Mark or the apostle or the presbyter with the same name. He considers himself a seer (Rev 1,12.17; 4,1) and not a prophet (44, 254-255). The Greek name *Johannes* is the equivalent of Hebrew *Johanan* ("The Lord is merciful"), which matches the purport of Rev 1,4 and 22,21. In comparison with other New Testament writings, Revelation's vocabulary and motifs are relatively close to the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Letters, as well as to the Gospel of Matthew.

Karrer rejects an early date of composition during Nero's rule, as well as a late date during that of Hadrian, because, in his view, both the internal and external evidence for the date of Revelation point to the period of 90-95 CE. He observes that no emperor is mentioned by name and that the symbolism that points to rulers is deliberately multi-valent (55). A late date is implausible also



in the light of the evidence for the relatively early reception of Revelation: Papias (to be dated between 110 and 130 CE; reference in Andrew of Caesarea) and Melito of Sardis were already familiar with the book. Karrer provides an excellent survey of the early reception of Revelation (including various chiliastic interpretations) and its various positions in the process of the formation of the canon. There is a further survey of the reception of Revelation in the Middle Ages and the period of the Reformation, which provides illuminating observations such as the impact of Rev 21,1 – 22,5 on the architecture of churches and Christian art because that passage was read, from late antiquity onward, during the consecration of churches and oratories (138, 150-151).

Karrer starts his elaborate commentary with a discussion of the label (Greek: *sillybos*) on the outside of the papyrus scroll on which the original text was written, as well as the subscription at the end of the text, which he reconstructs as (ἡ) ἀποκάλυψις and ἀποκαλύψεις/ἀποκάλυψις Ἰωάννου respectively. This label points to the supernatural revelation that underlies the work, which forms the starting point for a new genre of Christian apocalyptic literature that was popular in the second and third centuries CE. Concerning Rev 1,3, Karrer comments that the work presents a double temporal perspective by emphasizing not only the announcement of the end of times but also the nearness and activity of Jesus Christ in the present. Rev 1,5 characterizes Jesus Christ as the reliable witness and the archetype of the martyrs (“Urbild der Märtyrer”) because he was faithful until death (219). The θλίψις in 1,9 should be interpreted in the literal sense as a reference to the situation of John’s audience. Karrer notes that there is no external evidence for the exile of individual persons ordered by the emperor before Marcus Aurelius.

This is an excellent commentary because of its detailed, well-informed and balanced explanations of the Greek text, the exceptionally clear manner of presentation, and, not least of all, its interest in the reception of the book in literature and art. A clear advantage is that Karrer amply discusses important textual variants, such as the reading ἁγίοις of **Ⲱ** instead of δοῦλοις in 1,1 and the interpretation of ΑΝΤΙΠΑΣ in 2,13 (reading Ἀντιπᾶς or ἀντίπας = ἀντεῖπας). Not everybody will agree with all of Karrer’s opinions concerning the introductory matters, but in almost all cases his views are well argued. His discussion of the composition of Revelation is innovative but fairly short. It deals only very briefly with previous discussions of the composition. It does not answer the much-debated question of whether Revelation should be read in a linear or cyclical way, or in a way that integrates both views. The valuable sections about aspects of Revelation’s reception history can, of course, only be selective in the context of a commentary. In one case (Rev 2,9; 3,9), my own interpretation differs from the one chosen by Karrer, who argues (298-306, 353-354) that the phrases, “synagogue of Satan” and “those who say they are Jews”, refer to pagans also because there is scant evidence of a Jewish community in Smyrna in this period (2,9). External evidence, such as the phrase οἱ ποτὲ Ἰουδαῖοι in an inscription from Smyrna from the Hadrianic period, does not refer to Jewish renegades but to Jews originating from Judea or to Christians of Judean or Jewish origin. The latter interpretation is new and comes close to Karrer’s characterization of John’s own group. A recently discovered inscription with the phrase ΚΥΠΙΟΣ Ω ΠΙΣΤΙΣ Ω (discussed in R.S. Bagnall, *Everyday Writing in the Graeco-Roman East* [Sather Classical Lectures 69; Berkeley 2012] 22-23) would also point to a Jewish or

Christian group that was interested in graffiti and speculation with numbers, which would not be so different from mainstream Judaism in the city. All of these data lead Karrer to the conclusion that there is no evidence for an opposition between Jews and Christians in Smyrna. He adds that both passages should not be interpreted through the lens of later anti-semitism. As Karrer acknowledges, many scholars still follow the interpretation that the phrase, “those who say they are Jews”, does refer to Jews who did not recognize Jesus as Messiah, in contrast to John’s own group. Calling them a synagogue of Satan implies that one denies their Jewish identity, which can be viewed as an expression of anti-Judaism. Karrer may be right in his re-reading of both passages in their original context. Especially in this case, however, the reception history is very relevant, since these passages have frequently been interpreted in an anti-Jewish way and even used as legitimation for the persecutions of Jews. One recent example concerns the ethnic cleansing of Bessarabia and Bucovina by the Nazis in July 1941, which was supported by several leaders of the Rumanian-Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Irineu of Moldavia and Suceava commented jubilantly that God had sent Hitler as well as Antonescu as his archangels to earth, and that the Synagogue of Satan had become a ruin and was scattered into the four directions of the earth (I. Mihalcescu, *Preotimea si Razboiul sfant contra hidrei Bolsevice. Pastoralala* [The Clergy and the Holy War Against the Bolshevik Hydra. Pastoral] [Iasi 1941] 10). The question — not discussed by Karrer — is how far such a reading would go back in time.

The bibliography of works consulted is enormous, and I found very few typographical or other errors. All in all, Martin Karrer should be warmly congratulated for this first volume of a very learned commentary from which many students and scholars will undoubtedly benefit for a long time to come.

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## Varia

Daniel JUSTEL, *Infancia y legalidad en el Próximo Oriente antiguo durante el Bronce Reciente (ca. 1500-1100 A.C.)* (Ancient Near East Monographs 20). Atlanta, GA, Society of Biblical Literature, 2018. v-391 p. 15 × 22.5. \$75.95

In this published version of his revised doctoral dissertation (Universidad de Zaragoza), Daniel Justel gathers, organizes, and analyzes the textual data pertinent to the place of children (from infancy to adolescence) in ancient Near Eastern law during the Late Bronze Age (LBA). The texts considered come predominately from the archives of Mesopotamia and the Middle Euphrates. The monograph consists of an introduction, five topical chapters (treating childhood in relation



to abortion and exposure, marriage, adoption, slavery, and the sale of children), and a conclusion. It is complemented by indices providing ready access to discussions of personal names, various terms in the primary languages treated, divine names, toponyms, and primary texts. This work is characterized by considerable breadth, philological care (based in many instances on personal examination of the tablets, both published and unpublished), and an extensive bibliography, and it will doubtless serve as a sourcebook for future studies taking up the issues addressed.

The introduction outlines the objectives of the study and situates it within the larger field of Near-Eastern studies. The orientation of the work is textual; legal theory is not incorporated, nor is evidence from material culture considered systematically (7). Rather, the author aims to “evaluar la condición legal de la infancia en las diferentes realidades sociales de Mesopotamia y Siria durante el Bronce Reciente” (6) through an exhaustive study of relevant textual material coming from Middle Babylonian (Nippur, Ur, Tell Imlihiye, and Babylon), Middle Assyrian (Aššur, Harbe, and Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta), Mittanian (Nuzi and Alalah), and “Syrian” (Emar, Ugarit, and Tuttul) archives (8-19). The author includes texts of various genres, though the bulk of the material considered may be classified as legal or administrative (8). The method employed for building the corpus of texts for analysis focuses on locating (1) direct mention of terms referring to children (with attention given to the ambiguities attending the interpretation of such terms), and (2) texts dealing with individuals known to be children by other means (22-25). The coverage offered in this intentionally comparative study is considerable, though it is not clear why archival materials from Qatna have been excluded. The Idadda archive fits within the geographic and chronological window examined (T. Richter – S. Lange, *Das Archiv des Idadda* [Qatna Studien 3; Wiesbaden 2012]), and the potential relevance of TT 41 and the lexicographic interest of the challenging TT 5:66 (discussed by Richter [*Idadda*, 74]) might both have been helpfully discussed in the context of Justel’s study.

The first topical chapter (ch. 2) treats textual evidence relating to abortion and the exposure of infants. The decision to include a chapter treating these topics appears to have been driven by their establishment as relevant diachronic comparative *topoi* rather than by their salience for the corpus under consideration. Justel’s discussion of abortion depends on a single penalty assigned in the Middle Assyrian Laws (LAM 53) (30-32), while his evaluation of texts treating the exposure of infants essentially *removes* textual evidence for this practice from the LBA record (32-39).

The second chapter making up the body of the study (ch. 3) treats the intersection of childhood and marriage in the archives studied. Following a presentation of the sources, he offers discussion of the key Akkadian expressions relevant to identifying cases of childhood betrothal. His findings are placed within their broader historical context and a summary of the evidence is offered in a useful conclusion (76-79). Readers will likely be interested in the organized presentation of attested ages for betrothal in the different regions surveyed (77-78). The interaction with the primary texts, beginning with the process of selecting texts for study, exhibits a careful attention to detail. This is exemplified in his discussion of E6 216 and E6 124 as sources of evidence for childhood betrothal. In the case of the first, it is the impressed footprints of the individual concerned (E6 218) that reveal her young age (about 2 years), while in the case of the second

Justel presents a series of reasonable inferences that lead him to affirm the relevance of the document for the topic under consideration (66). In neither of these cases are there clear terminological features suggesting a young age for the individuals concerned, which is to say that Justel can only have located such examples through a very careful and thoughtful survey of the sources.

The third chapter discusses the adoption of children in the LBA sources under consideration. This is perhaps one of the most informative chapters in the monograph, in no small part because, as the author observes, the majority of attested (and studied) adoptions in the ancient Near East involve adults. This work constitutes the first major study devoted specifically to childhood adoption (82). The discussion of the sources goes beyond the role played by children in the documentation, offering what approaches a history of LBA adoption contracts, clarified through tabular presentations of key terms and formulae employed in the different archives surveyed. His synthetic discussion of the individuals involved in such exchanges offers a wealth of information, including discussions of topics such as adoption within the family (104), obligations incumbent upon adoptive parents (105-106), and an entire subsection devoted to identifying the number and roles of individuals who seal and witness adoption contracts (109-111).

The next two chapters (ch. 5-6) treat childhood slavery and the closely-related topic of the sale of children. Both of these chapters, like ch. 4, present detailed syntheses of the data available, with close studies of the individuals involved in the institutions and practices under consideration. The study is sensitive to and incorporates the gains achievable through prosopographic research, which lends considerable depth to the treatment (e.g., 171-172).

Finally, the concluding chapter helpfully draws together the interpretive lines pursued throughout the work and offers a useful summary of the key findings. Technically, the book is fairly clean, with a moderate number of typographical errors. Most citations of Hebrew lexemes, however, both in Hebrew script and in transliteration, incorporate errors that can render the associated comments difficult to interpret. The right-hand image in fig. 3 (293) has also been inverted.

As a multi-archival comparison, the book is a success. Justel pays close attention to the similarities and differences in the genres, formulaic expressions, terminology, and real-world parameters involved from archive to archive for each topic addressed, and he capably situates the LBA sources within their broader historical context. This sort of breadth is difficult to achieve with perfect uniformity, and I offer here several remarks regarding the treatment of material from Ugarit, which, while included among archives selected for study, seems in reality to stand outside the primary focus of the monograph. His introduction to the corpus (17) reduces its volume by half, indicating a total of approximately 2000 tablets (alphabetic and syllabic) recovered from the site (well over 4000 tablets have in fact been found). Of these, only one text is chosen for study: RS 11.857 (= *KTU* 4.102), a list of households enumerating women and “children” (the Ugaritic terms used are ambiguous with respect to actual age) associated with each household. Acknowledging that other interpretations are possible, Justel suggests that the toponym *Alašiya* (𐎠𐎵𐎠𐎹𐎶𐎵) appearing on the left edge of the tablet may be intended to designate the origin of the women and children listed. He then indicates that an unpublished letter “trata de un emisario del rey de Alašia que llega a Ugarit con el fin de obtener la liberación de chipriotas retenidos en Ugarit” (141-142), concluding on this basis that RS 11.857 “podría recoger una

lista de mujeres y niños chipriotas que el rey de Ugarit habría recibido como compensación por la ayuda prestada a Ḫatti en su conquista (probablemente parcial) de Chipre” (142).

The unpublished letter to which reference is made was actually published in 2016 (RS 94.2173 = S. Lackenbacher – F. Malbran-Labat, *Lettres en akkadien de la «Maison d’Urtēnu»*. Fouilles de 1994 [RSO 23; Leuven 2016] 41-42), and the editors of the text raise the possibility of understanding this letter in connection with RS 94.2561, which may call for the seizure of three Alašīyan merchants (if indeed these *a-la-zi*(sic!)-*a-ia* are Alašīyan) (Lackenbacher – Malbran-Labat, *Lettres*, 42). If this connection is accepted, then RS 94.2173 has nothing to do with slaves from Alašiya.

Returning to RS 11.857 (= *KTU* 4.102), the bibliographic point of departure is not Albrecht Alt’s 1964 article, which Justel cites (142 n. 584), but rather his 1954 article by the same name (“Bemerkungen zu den Verwaltungs- und Rechtsurkunden von Ugarit und Alalach”, *WdO* 2 [1954] 7-18). Nor can van Soldt be said to have argued for an interpretation of the list as a “lista de asignación de bienes inmuebles” (141), which it certainly cannot be. In the study Justel cites for this position, van Soldt actually identifies a number of personal names appearing in RS 11.857 that also make appearances in the *ūbdu*-lists (“The City-Administration of Ugarit”, *City Administration in the Ancient Near East* [ed. L. Kogan *et al.*] [RAI 53/2; Winona Lake, IN 2010] 257-258), a fact increasing the plausibility of hypotheses treating these households as Ugaritian. The role played by the women and “children” remains unclear, but it may be worth revisiting this text in connection with the fragmentary and only recently published RIH 94/01 (P. Bordreuil – D. Pardee – C. Roche-Hawley, *Ras Ibn Hani II. Les textes en écritures cunéiformes de l’âge du Bronze récent* (fouilles 1977 à 2002) [BAH 213; Beirut 2019] text no. 24). Finally, if RS 11.857 is to be included in this study due to its mention of “children” (*bn*, *bt*, *n’r*, *n’rt*, *pḡt*, and *ḡzr* being the terms employed; Justel does not indicate which of these he regards as terms referring to children), a number of other texts might also have been usefully studied, including the inscribed liver model RS 24.312 (= *KTU* 1.141), which pertains to a moment at which ‘Agaptarri “was going to acquire the youth of the Alašīyan” (*k yqny ḡzr d altyy*) (see D. Pardee, *Les textes rituels* [RSO 12.2; Paris 2000] 766-768).

These remarks pertaining to the Ugaritic material are offered not as a criticism of what is otherwise a thorough study, but rather out of the conviction that Justel’s work will be one of lasting importance, generating opportunities for new directions of research and the fruitful extension of his methods and findings. We are fortunate to have such a study at our disposal, and the author is to be congratulated for his work.

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# NUNTII PERSONARUM ET RERUM

STEPHEN F. PISANO, S.J. (1946-2019)

## *In memoriam*

“Catch, then, O catch the transient hour; Improve each moment as it flies!” This sentence attributed to saint Jerome leapt to my mind when thinking of Stephen Pisano, S.J. who left us on October, 7, 2019 at the age of 73. The maxim applies well to a life filled to the brim by occupations in many fields.

Stephen Pisano was born on April 16, 1946, in New York City. His family left New York soon, however, and he spent most of his childhood and young years in California. He came in contact with the Society of Jesus in San José, CA, while attending Bellarmine College Preparatory School. He then decided to join the Society of Jesus in September 1964, in Los Gatos, CA, where he followed the usual paths of Jesuit formation but also, as he told me, working in the vineyards of the novitiate, especially in the vintage season. He left California for Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA, where he studied philosophy, and left the US to come and study theology in France, first in Fourvière (Lyon) and afterwards in Centre Sèvres (Paris). Steve could therefore speak French fluently, as well as several other languages. He came back to California to be ordained a priest in San Francisco on June 5, 1975. In September 1976, he came to Rome to study biblical exegesis at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, which was to become his home until his last days. He obtained his licentiate in 1979, and went to Fribourg (Switzerland) to write his thesis under the direction of Fr. Dominique Barthélemy, O.P. The reason was that, in 1980, the professor of textual criticism in our Institute, Fr. Carlo Maria Martini, had been appointed archbishop of Milan. Asked to be Martini’s successor, Steve went to Fribourg to deepen his knowledge of the secrets of biblical manuscripts with one of the main specialists in the field. His thesis, *Additions or Omissions in the Books of Samuel. The Significant Pluses and Minuses in the Massoretic, LXX and Qumran Texts* (OBO 57; Freiburg Schweiz – Göttingen 1984) is the fruit of these years of study. This is also

the reason why he was asked afterwards to take care of the edition of the books of Samuel in the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*.

Once he came back to the Biblicum, in 1982, he was in charge of the course of textual criticism. He also offered classes on the Septuagint and on the Books of Samuel. But this is not all, since his human and intellectual talents were quickly discovered and exploited in many areas of our Institute. He was a careful managing editor of *Biblica* for twelve years (1984-1996), and who knows how many articles or book reviews benefited from the light touch of his conscientious hand. Besides this, he became an attentive superior of the community, first, when he was still very young, in 1985-1992, and then a second time during his last journey among us, from 2014 until the fall of 2019. The attention to details that characterized his exegetical work was also to be observed in the many tasks required by the administration of a house. The Institute profited also from his serene and gentle guidance as dean (1997-2002, 2010-2013), vice-rector (2008-2010, 2015-2019), and rector (2002-2008).

Stephen Pisano directed a dozen theses and published a series of articles, mainly on textual criticism and the Books of Samuel. Yes, Steve, you left us very early and we miss your quiet smile, your mild irony, your long pauses of silent reflection, and your reassuring presence. “Life is a short summer – man, a flower” (Samuel Johnson).

Jean Louis SKA

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**Andruska**, Jennifer, *Wise and Foolish Love in the Song of Songs* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 75). Leiden, Brill, 2019. xiii-219 p. 16,5 × 24. €104,00

**Angulo Ordorika**, Ianire, “¿No habéis leído esta escritura?” (Mc 12,10). El trasfondo veterotestamentario como clave hermenéutica de Mc 12,1-12 (Analecta Biblica - Dissertationes 226). Rome, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2019. v-389 p. 16,5 × 23. €30,00

**Attridge**, Harold W., *History, Theology, and Narrative Rhetoric in the Fourth Gospel* (The Père Marquette Lecture in Theology 2019). Milwaukee, WI, Marquette University Press, 2019. iv-101 p. 12 × 18,5. €13,45

**Avalos**, Hector, *The Reality of Religious Violence*. From Biblical to Modern Times (The Bible in the Modern World 72). Sheffield, Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019. xiv-499 p. 16,5 × 24. £75,00

**Belleville**, Linda L. – **Oropeza**, B.J. (eds.), *Scripture, Texts, and Tracings in 1 Corinthians* (Scripture and Paul Series). Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2019. xiii-281 p. 16 × 23,5. \$95,00

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**Benzi**, Guido – **Di Pede**, Elena – **Scaiola**, Donatella (eds.), *Profeti maggiori e minori a confronto – Major and minor prophets compared* (Nuova biblioteca di scienze religiose 61). Roma, Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 2019. vii-289 p. 17 × 24. €19,00

**Bergland**, Kenneth, *Reading as a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart*. Proto-halakhic Reuse and Appropriation between Torah and the Prophets (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte 23). Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 2019. xv-362 p. 17 × 24. €98,00

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